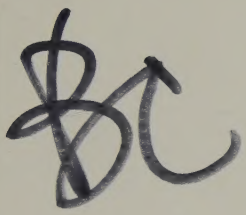

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Pierre and his people; tales of the far North

THE WORKS OF GILBERT PARKER

IMPERIAL EDITION

VOLUME

I

Gilbert Parker

GILBERT PARKER

PIERRE AND HIS PEOPLE

TALES OF THE FAR NORTH

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1912

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To

MY BROTHERS

FREDERICK, LIONEL, HARRY, AND ARTHUR

AND

BLISS CARMAN, MY COMRADE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

With each volume of this subscription edition there is a special introduction, setting forth, in so far as seemed possible, the relation of each work to myself, to its companion works, and to the scheme of my literary life. Only one or two things, therefore, need be said here, as I wish God-speed to this edition, which, I trust, may help to make old friends warmer friends and new friends more understanding. Most of the novels and most of the short stories were suggested by incidents or characters which I had known, had heard of intimately, or, as in the case of the historical novels, had discovered in the works of historians. In no case are the main characters drawn absolutely from life; they are not portraits; and the proof of that is that no one has ever been able to identify, absolutely, any single character in these books. Indeed, it would be impossible for me to restrict myself to actual portraiture. It is trite to say that photography is not art, and photography has no charm for the artist, or the humanitarian indeed, in the portrayal of life. At its best it is only an exhibition of outer formal characteristics, idiosyncrasies, and contours. Freedom is the first essential of the artistic mind. As will be noticed in the introductions and original notes to several of these volumes, it is stated that they possess anachronisms; that they are not portraits of people living or dead, and that they only assume to be in harmony with the spirit of men and times and things. Perhaps in the first few pages of *The Right of Way* portraiture is more nearly reached than in any other of these books, but it was only the nucleus, if I may say so, of a larger development which the original Charley Steele

never attained. In the novel he grew to represent infinitely more than the original ever represented in his short life.

That would not be strange when it is remembered that the germ of *The Right of Way* was growing in my mind over a long period of years, and it must necessarily have developed into a larger conception than the original character could have suggested. The same may be said of the chief characters in *The Weavers*. The story of the two brothers—David Claridge and Lord Eglington—in that book was brewing in my mind for quite fifteen years, and the main incidents and characters of other novels in this edition had the same slow growth. My forthcoming novel, called *The Judgment House*, had been in my mind for nearly twenty years and only emerged when it was full grown, as it were; when I was so familiar with the characters that they seemed as real in all ways as though they were absolute people and incidents of one's own experience.

Little more need be said. In outward form the publishers have made this edition beautiful. I should be ill-content if there was not also an element of beauty in the work of the author. To my mind truth alone is not sufficient. Every work of art, no matter how primitive in conception, how tragic or how painful, or even how grotesque in design—like the gargoyles on Notre Dame—must have, too, the elements of beauty—that which lures and holds, the durable and delightful thing. I have a hope that these books of mine, as faithful to life as I could make them, have also been touched here and there by the staff of beauty. Otherwise their day will be short indeed; and I should wish for them a day a little longer at least than my day and span.

I launch the ship. May it visit many a port! May its freight never lie neglected on the quays!

INTRODUCTION

So far as my literary work is concerned *Pierre and His People* may be likened to a new city built upon the ashes of an old one. Let me explain. While I was in Australia I began a series of short stories and sketches of life in Canada which I called *Pike Pole Sketches on the Madawaska.* A very few of them were published in Australia, and I brought with me to England in 1889 about twenty of them to make into a volume. I told Archibald Forbes, the great war correspondent, of my wish for publication, and asked him if he would mind reading the sketches and stories before I approached a publisher. He immediately consented, and one day I brought him the little brown bag containing the tales.

A few days afterwards there came an invitation to lunch, and I went to Clarence Gate, Regent's Park, to learn what Archibald Forbes thought of my tales. We were quite merry at luncheon, and after luncheon, which for him was a glass of milk and a biscuit, Forbes said to me, "Those stories, Parker—you have the best collection of titles I have ever known." He paused. I understood. To his mind the tales did not live up to their titles. He hastily added, "But I am going to give you a letter of introduction to Macmillan. I may be wrong." My reply was: "You need not give me a letter to Macmillan unless I write and ask you for it."

I took my little brown bag and went back to my comfortable rooms in an old-fashioned square. I sat down before the fire on this bleak winter's night with a couple of years' work on my knee. One by one I glanced through the stories and in some cases read them carefully, and one by one I put them in the fire,

and watched them burn. I was heavy at heart, but I felt that Forbes was right, and my own instinct told me that my ideas were better than my performance—and Forbes was right. Nothing was left of the tales; not a shred of paper, not a scrap of writing. They had all gone up the chimney in smoke. There was no self-pity. I had a grim kind of feeling regarding the thing, but I had no regrets, and I have never had any regrets since. I have forgotten most of the titles, and indeed all the stories except one. But Forbes and I were right; of that I am sure.

The next day after the arson I walked for hours where London was busiest. The shop windows fascinated me; they always did; but that day I seemed, subconsciously, to be looking for something. At last I found it. It was a second-hand shop in Covent Garden. In the window there was the uniform of an officer of the time of Wellington, and beside it—the leather coat and fur cap of a trapper of the Hudson's Bay Company! At that window I commenced to build again upon the ashes of last night's fire. Pretty Pierre, the French half-breed, or rather the original of him as I knew him when a child, looked out of the window at me. So I went home, and sitting in front of the fire which had received my manuscript the night before, with a pad upon my knee, I began to write *The Patrol of the Cypress Hills* which opens *Pierre and His People.*

The next day was Sunday. I went to service at the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury, and while listening superficially to the sermon I was also reading the psalms. I came upon these words, "*Free among the Dead like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave, that are out of remembrance,*" and this text, which I used in the story *The Patrol of the Cypress Hills,* became, in a sense, the text for all the stories which came after. It seemed to suggest the lives and the end of the lives of the workers of the pioneer world.

So it was that *Pierre and His People* chiefly concerned those

who had been wounded by Fate, and had suffered the robberies of life and time while they did their work in the wide places. It may be that my readers have found what I tried, instinctively, to convey in the pioneer life I portrayed—"The soul of goodness in things evil." Such, on the whole, my observation had found in life, and the original of Pierre, with all his mistakes, misdemeanours, and even crimes, was such an one as I would have gone to in trouble or in hour of need, knowing that his face would never be turned from me.

These stories made their place at once. *The Patrol of the Cypress Hills* was published first in *The Independent* of New York and in *Macmillan's Magazine* in England. Mr. Bliss Carman, then editor of *The Independent*, eagerly published several of them —*She of the Triple Chevron* and others. Mr. Carman's sympathy and insight were a great help to me in those early days. The then editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, Mr. Mowbray Morris, was not, I think, quite so sure of the merits of the *Pierre* stories. He published them, but he was a little credulous regarding them, and he did not pat me on the back by any means. There was one, however, who made the best that is in *Pierre and His People* possible; this was the unforgettable W. E. Henley, editor of *The National Observer*. One day at a sitting I wrote a short story called *Antoine and Angelique*, and sent it to him almost before the ink was dry. The reply came by return of post: "It is almost, or quite, as good as can be. Send me another." So forthwith I sent him *God's Garrison*, and it was quickly followed by *The Three Outlaws*, *The Tall Master*, *The Flood*, *The Cipher*, *A Prairie Vagabond*, and several others. At length came *The Stone*, which brought a telegram of congratulation, and finally *The Crimson Flag*. The acknowledgment of that was a post-card containing these all too-flattering words: "Bravo, Balzac!" Henley would print what no other editor would print; he gave a man his chance to do the boldest thing that was in him, and I can truthfully say that the doors which he threw open gave free-

dom to an imagination and an individuality of conception, for which I can never be sufficiently grateful.

These stories and others which appeared in *The National Observer,* in *Macmillan's,* in *The English Illustrated Magazine* and others made many friends; so that when the book at length came out it was received with generous praise, though not without some criticism. It made its place, however, at once, and later appeared another series, called *An Adventurer of the North,* or, as it is called in this edition, *A Romany of the Snows.* Through all the twenty stories of this second volume the character of Pierre moved; and by the time the last was written there was scarcely an important magazine in the English-speaking world which had not printed one or more of them. Whatever may be thought of the stories themselves, or of the manner in which the life of the Far North was portrayed, of one thing I am sure: Pierre was true to the life—to his race, to his environment, to the conditions of pioneer life through which he moved. When the book first came out there was some criticism from Canada itself, but that criticism has long since died away, and it never was determined.

Plays have been founded on the *Pierre* series, and one in particular, *Pierre of the Plains,* had a considerable success, with Mr. Edgar Selwyn, the adapter, in the main part. I do not know whether, if I were to begin again, I should have written all the *Pierre* stories in quite the same way. Perhaps it is just as well that I am not able to begin again. The stories made their own place in their own way, and that there is still a steady demand for *Pierre and His People* and *A Romany of the Snows* seems evidence that the editor of an important magazine in New York who declined to recommend them for publication to his firm (and later published several of the same series) was wrong, when he said that the tales "seemed not to be salient." Things that are not "salient" do not endure. It is twenty years since *Pierre and His People* was produced—and it still endures. For this I cannot but be deeply grateful. In any case, what *Pierre*

did was to open up a field which had not been opened before, but which other authors have exploited since with success and distinction. *Pierre* was the pioneer of the Far North in fiction; that much may be said; and for the rest, Time is the test, and Time will have its way with me as with the rest.

NOTE

It is possible that a Note on the country portrayed in these stories may be in keeping. Until 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company—first granted its charter by King Charles II—practically ruled that vast region stretching from the fiftieth parallel of latitude to the Arctic Ocean—a handful of adventurous men entrenched in forts and posts, yet trading with, and mostly peacefully conquering, many savage tribes. Once the sole master of the North, the H. B. C. (as it is familiarly called) is reverenced by the Indians and half-breeds as much as, if not more than, the Government established at Ottawa. It has had its forts within the Arctic Circle; it has successfully exploited a country larger than the United States. The Red River Valley, the Saskatchewan Valley, and British Columbia, are now belted by a great railway, and given to the plough; but in the far north life is much the same as it was a hundred years ago. There the trapper, clerk, trader, and factor are cast in the mould of another century, though possessing the acuter energies of this. The *voyageur* and *courier de bois* still exist, though, generally, under less picturesque names.

The bare story of the hardy and wonderful career of the adventurers trading in Hudson's Bay,—of whom Prince Rupert was once chiefest,—and the life of the prairies, may be found in histories and books of travel; but their romances, the near narratives of individual lives, have waited the telling. In this book I have tried to feel my way towards the heart of that life—worthy of being loved by all British men, for it has given honest graves to gallant fellows of our breeding. Imperfectly, of course, I have done it; but there is much more to be told.

When I started Pretty Pierre on his travels, I did not know —nor did he—how far or wide his adventurers and experiences would run. They have, however, extended from Quebec in the east to British Columbia in the west, and from the Cypress Hills in the south to the Coppermine River in the north. With a less adventurous man we had had fewer happenings. His faults were not of his race,—that is, French and Indian,—nor were his virtues; they belong to all peoples. But the expression of these is affected by the country itself. Pierre passes through this series of stories, connecting them, as he himself connects two races, and here and there links the past of the Hudson's Bay Company with more modern life and Canadian energy pushing northward. Here is something of romance "pure and simple," but also traditions and character, which are the single property of this austere but not cheerless heritage of our race.

All of the tales have appeared in magazines and journals—namely, *The National Observer, Macmillan's, The National Review,* and *The English Illustrated;* and *The Independent* of New York. By the courtesy of the proprietors of these I am permitted to republish.

G. P.

HARPENDEN,
HERTFORDSHIRE,
July, 1892.

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THE PATROL OF THE CYPRESS HILLS

THE PATROL OF THE CYPRESS HILLS

"He's too ha'sh," said old Alexander Windsor, as he shut the creaking door of the store after a vanishing figure, and turned to the big iron stove with outstretched hands; hands that were cold both summer and winter. He was of lean and frigid make.

"Sergeant Fones is too ha'sh," he repeated, as he pulled out the damper and cleared away the ashes with the iron poker.

Pretty Pierre blew a quick, straight column of cigarette smoke into the air, tilted his chair back, and said: "I do not know what you mean by 'ha'sh,' but he is the devil. Eh, well, there was more than one devil made sometime in the North West." He laughed softly.

"That gives you a chance in history, Pretty Pierre," said a voice from behind a pile of woollen goods and buffalo skins in the centre of the floor. The owner of the voice then walked to the window. He scratched some frost from the pane and looked out to where the trooper in dog-skin coat, gauntlets and cap, was mounting his broncho. The old man came and stood near the young man,—the owner of the voice,—and said again: "He's too ha'sh."

"*Harsh* you mean, father," added the other.

"Yes, *harsh* you mean, Old Brown Windsor,—quite harsh," said Pierre.

Alexander Windsor, storekeeper and general dealer,

was sometimes called "Old Brown Windsor" and sometimes "Old Aleck," to distinguish him from his son, who was known as "Young Aleck."

As the old man walked back again to the stove to warm his hands, Young Aleck continued: "He does his duty, that's all. If he doesn't wear kid gloves while at it, it's his choice. He doesn't go beyond his duty. You can bank on that. It would be hard to exceed that way out here."

"True, Young Aleck, so true; but then he wears gloves of iron, of ice. That is not good. Sometime the glove will be too hard and cold on a man's shoulder, and then!— Well, I should like to be there," said Pierre, showing his white teeth.

Old Aleck shivered, and held his fingers where the stove was red hot.

The young man did not hear this speech; from the window he was watching Sergeant Fones as he rode towards the Big Divide. Presently he said: "He's going towards Humphrey's place. I—" He stopped, bent his brows, caught one corner of his slight moustache between his teeth, and did not stir a muscle until the Sergeant had passed over the Divide.

Old Aleck was meanwhile dilating upon his theme before a passive listener. But Pierre was only passive outwardly. Besides hearkening to the father's complaints he was closely watching the son. Pierre was clever, and a good actor. He had learned the power of reserve and outward immobility. The Indian in him helped him there. He had heard what Young Aleck had just muttered; but to the man of the cold fingers he said: "You keep good whisky in spite of the law and the iron glove, Old Aleck." To the young man: "And you can drink it so free, eh, Young Aleck?"

The half-breed looked out of the corners of his eyes at the young man, but he did not raise the peak of his fur cap in doing so, and his glances askance were not seen.

Young Aleck had been writing something with his finger-nail on the frost of the pane, over and over again. When Pierre spoke to him thus he scratched out the word he had written, with what seemed unnecessary force. But in one corner it remained: "Mab—"

Pierre added: "That is what they say at Humphrey's ranch."

"Who says that at Humphrey's?—Pierre, you lie!" was the sharp and threatening reply. The significance of this last statement had been often attested on the prairies by the piercing emphasis of a six-chambered revolver. It was evident that Young Aleck was in earnest. Pierre's eyes glowed in the shadow, but he idly replied:

"I do not remember quite who said it. Well, *mon ami*, perhaps I lie; perhaps. Sometimes we dream things, and these dreams are true. You call it a lie—*bien!* Sergeant Fones, he dreams perhaps Old Aleck sells whisky against the law to men you call whisky runners, sometimes to Indians and half-breeds—half-breeds like Pretty Pierre. That was a dream of Sergeant Fones; but you see he believes it true. It is good sport, eh? Will you not take—what is it?—a silent partner? Yes; a silent partner, Old Aleck. Pretty Pierre has spare time, a little, to make money for his friends and for himself, eh?"

When did not Pierre have time to spare? He was a gambler. Unlike the majority of half-breeds, he had a pronounced French manner, nonchalant and debonair.

The Indian in him gave him coolness and nerve. His cheeks had a tinge of delicate red under their whiteness, like those of a woman. That was why he was called Pretty Pierre. The country had, however, felt a kind of weird menace in the name. It was used to snakes whose rattle gave notice of approach or signal of danger. But Pretty Pierre was like the death-adder, small and beautiful, silent and deadly. At one time he had made a secret of his trade, or thought he was doing so. In those days he was often to be seen at David Humphrey's home, and often in talk with Mab Humphrey; but it was there one night that the man who was *ha'sh* gave him his true character, with much candour and no comment.

Afterwards Pierre was not seen at Humphrey's ranch. Men prophesied that he would have revenge some day on Sergeant Fones; but he did not show anything on which this opinion could be based. He took no umbrage at being called Pretty Pierre the gambler. But for all that he was possessed of a devil.

Young Aleck had inherited some money through his dead mother from his grandfather, a Hudson's Bay factor. He had been in the East for some years, and when he came back he brought his "little pile" and an impressionable heart with him. The former Pretty Pierre and his friends set about to win; the latter, Mab Humphrey won without the trying. Yet Mab gave Young Aleck as much as he gave her. More. Because her love sprang from a simple, earnest, and uncontaminated life. Her purity and affection were being played against Pierre's designs and Young Aleck's weakness. With Aleck cards and liquor went together. Pierre seldom drank.

But what of Sergeant Fones? If the man that knew

him best—the Commandant—had been asked for his history, the reply would have been: "Five years in the Service, rigid disciplinarian, best non-commissioned officer on the Patrol of the Cypress Hills." That was all the Commandant knew.

A soldier-policeman's life on the frontier is rough, solitary, and severe. Active duty and responsibility are all that make it endurable. To few is it fascinating. A free and thoughtful nature would, however, find much in it, in spite of great hardships, to give interest and even pleasure. The sense of breadth and vastness, and the inspiration of pure air could be a very gospel of strength, beauty, and courage, to such an one—for a time. But was Sergeant Fones such an one? The Commandant's scornful reply to a question of the kind would have been: "He is the best soldier on the Patrol."

And so with hard gallops here and there after the refugees of crime or misfortune, or both, who fled before them like deer among the passes of the hills, and, like deer at bay, often fought like demons to the death; with border watchings, and protection and care and vigilance of the Indians; with hurried marches at sunrise, the thermometer at fifty degrees below zero often in winter, and open camps beneath the stars, and no camp at all, as often as not, winter and summer; with rough barrack fun and parade and drill and guard of prisoners; and with chances now and then to pay homage to a woman's face,—the Mounted Force grew full of the Spirit of the West and became brown, valiant, and hardy, with wind and weather. Perhaps some of them longed to touch, oftener than they did, the hands of children, and to consider more the faces of women, —for hearts are hearts even under a belted coat of red

on the Fiftieth Parallel,—but men of nerve do not blazon their feelings.

No one would have accused Sergeant Fones of having a heart. Men of keen discernment would have seen in him the little Bismarck of the Mounted Police. His name carried farther on the Cypress Hills Patrol than any other; and yet his officers could never say that he exceeded his duty or enlarged upon the orders he received. He had no sympathy with crime. Others of the force might wink at it; but his mind appeared to sit severely upright upon the cold platform of Penalty, in beholding breaches of the statutes. He would not have rained upon the unjust as the just if he had had the directing of the heavens. As Private Gellatly put it: "Sergeant Fones has the fear o' God in his heart, and the law of the land across his saddle, and the newest breech-loading at that!" He was part of the great machine of Order, the servant of Justice, the sentinel in the vestibule of Martial Law. His interpretation of duty worked upward as downward. Officers and privates were acted on by the force known as Sergeant Fones. Some people, like Old Brown Windsor, spoke hardly and openly of this force. There were three people who never did—Pretty Pierre, Young Aleck, and Mab Humphrey. Pierre hated him; Young Aleck admired in him a quality lying dormant in himself—decision; Mab Humphrey spoke unkindly of no one. Besides—but no!

What was Sergeant Fones's country? No one knew. Where had he come from? No one asked him more than once. He could talk French with Pierre,—a kind of French that sometimes made the undertone of red in the Frenchman's cheeks darker. He had been heard to speak German to a German prisoner, and once,

when a gang of Italians were making trouble on a line of railway under construction, he arrested the leader, and, in a few swift, sharp words in the language of the rioters, settled the business. He had no accent that betrayed his nationality.

He had been recommended for a commission. The officer in command had hinted that the Sergeant might get a Christmas present. The officer had further said: "And if it was something that both you and the Patrol would be the better for, you couldn't object, Sergeant." But the Sergeant only saluted, looking steadily into the eyes of the officer. That was his reply.

Private Gellatly, standing without, heard Sergeant Fones say, as he passed into the open air, and slowly bared his forehead to the winter sun:

"Exactly."

And Private Gellatly cried, with revolt in his voice, "Divils me own, the word that a't to have been full o' joy was like the clip of a rifle-breech."

Justice in a new country is administered with promptitude and vigour, or else not administered at all. Where an officer of the Mounted Police-Soldiery has all the powers of a magistrate, the law's delay and the insolence of office have little space in which to work. One of the commonest slips of virtue in the Canadian West was selling whisky contrary to the law of prohibition which prevailed. Whisky runners were land smugglers. Old Brown Windsor had, somehow, got the reputation of being connected with the whisky runners; not a very respectable business, and thought to be dangerous. Whisky runners were inclined to resent intrusion on their privacy with a touch of that biting inhospitableness which a moonlighter of Kentucky uses toward an inquisitive, un-

sympathetic marshal. On the Cypress Hills Patrol, however, the erring servants of Bacchus were having a hard time of it. Vigilance never slept there in the days of which these lines bear record. Old Brown Windsor had, in words, freely espoused the cause of the sinful. To the careless spectator it seemed a charitable siding with the suffering; a proof that the old man's heart was not so cold as his hands. Sergeant Fones thought differently, and his mission had just been to warn the store-keeper that there was menacing evidence gathering against him, and that his friendship with Golden Feather, the Indian Chief, had better cease at once. Sergeant Fones had a way of putting things. Old Brown Windsor endeavoured for a moment to be sarcastic. This was the brief dialogue in the domain of sarcasm:

"I s'pose you just lit round in a friendly sort of way, hopin' that I'd kenoodle with you later."

"Exactly."

There was an unpleasant click to the word. The old man's hands got colder. He had nothing more to say.

Before leaving, the Sergeant said something quietly and quickly to Young Aleck. Pierre observed, but could not hear. Young Aleck was uneasy; Pierre was perplexed. The Sergeant turned at the door, and said in French: "What are your chances for a Merry Christmas at Pardon's Drive, Pretty Pierre?" Pierre answered nothing. He shrugged his shoulders, and as the door closed, muttered, "*Il est le diable.*" And he meant it. What should Sergeant Fones know of that intended meeting at Pardon's Drive on Christmas Day? And if he knew, what then? It was not against the law to play euchre. Still it perplexed Pierre. Before

the Windsors, father and son, however, he was, as we have seen, playfully cool.

After quitting Old Brown Windsor's store, Sergeant Fones urged his stout broncho to a quicker pace than usual. The broncho was, like himself, wasteful of neither action nor affection. The Sergeant had caught him wild and independent, had brought him in, broken him, and taught him obedience. They understood each other; perhaps they loved each other. But about that even Private Gellatly had views in common with the general sentiment as to the character of Sergeant Fones. The private remarked once on this point: "Sarpints alive! the heels of the one and the law of the other is the love of them. They'll weather together like the Divil and Death."

The Sergeant was brooding; that was not like him. He was hesitating; that was less like him. He turned his broncho round as if to cross the Big Divide and to go back to Windsor's store; but he changed his mind again, and rode on toward David Humphrey's ranch. He sat as if he had been born in the saddle. His was a face for the artist, strong and clear, and having a dominant expression of force. The eyes were deep-set and watchful. A kind of disdain might be traced in the curve of the short upper lip, to which the moustache was clipped close—a good fit, like his coat. The disdain was more marked this morning.

The first part of his ride had been seen by Young Aleck, the second part by Mab Humphrey. Her first thought on seeing him was one of apprehension for Young Aleck and those of Young Aleck's name. She knew that people spoke of her lover as a ne'er-do-weel; and that they associated his name freely with that of Pretty Pierre and his gang. She had a dread of Pierre,

and, only the night before, she had determined to make one last great effort to save Aleck, and if he would not be saved—strange that, thinking it all over again, as she watched the figure on horseback coming nearer, her mind should swerve to what she had heard of Sergeant Fones's expected promotion. Then she fell to wondering if anyone had ever given him a real Christmas present; if he had any friends at all; if life meant anything more to him than carrying the law of the land across his saddle. Again he suddenly came to her in a new thought, free from apprehension, and as the champion of her cause to defeat the half-breed and his gang, and save Aleck from present danger or future perils.

She was such a woman as prairies nurture; in spirit broad and thoughtful and full of energy; not so deep as the mountain woman, not so imaginative, but with more persistency, more daring. Youth to her was a warmth, a glory. She hated excess and lawlessness, but she could understand it. She felt sometimes as if she must go far away into the unpeopled spaces, and shriek out her soul to the stars from the fulness of too much life. She supposed men had feelings of that kind too, but that they fell to playing cards and drinking instead of crying to the stars. Still, she preferred her way.

Once, Sergeant Fones, on leaving the house, said grimly after his fashion: "Not Mab but Ariadne—excuse a soldier's bluntness. . . . Good-bye!" and with a brusque salute he had ridden away. What he meant she did not know and could not ask. The thought instantly came to her mind: Not Sergeant Fones; but—who? She wondered if Ariadne was born on the prairie. What knew she of the girl who helped Theseus, her

lover, to slay the Minotaur? What guessed she of the Slopes of Naxos? How old was Ariadne? Twenty?—For that was Mab's age. Was Ariadne beautiful?—She ran her fingers loosely through her short brown hair, waving softly about her Greek-shaped head, and reasoned that Ariadne must have been presentable, or Sergeant Fones would not have made the comparison. She hoped Ariadne could ride well, for *she* could.

But how white the world looked this morning, and how proud and brilliant the sky! Nothing in the plane of vision but waves of snow stretching to the Cypress Hills; far to the left a solitary house, with its tin roof flashing back the sun, and to the right the Big Divide. It was an old-fashioned winter, not one in which bare ground and sharp winds make life outdoors inhospitable. Snow is hospitable—clean, impacted snow; restful and silent. But there was one spot in the area of white, on which Mab's eyes were fixed now, with something different in them from what had been there. Again it was a memory with which Sergeant Fones was associated. One day in the summer just past she had watched him and his company put away to rest under the cool sod, where many another lay in silent company, a prairie wanderer, some outcast from a better life gone by. Afterwards, in her home, she saw the Sergeant stand at the window, looking out towards the spot where the waves in the sea of grass were more regular and greener than elsewhere, and were surmounted by a high cross. She said to him—for she of all was never shy of his stern ways:

"Why is the grass always greenest *there*, Sergeant Fones?"

He knew what she meant, and slowly said: "It is the Barracks of the Free."

She had no views of life save those of duty and work and natural joy and loving a ne'er-do-weel, and she said: "I do not understand that."

And the Sergeant replied: "'*Free among the Dead like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave, who are out of remembrance.*'"

But Mab said again: "I do not understand that either."

The Sergeant did not at once reply. He stepped to the door and gave a short command to some one without, and in a moment his company was mounted in line; handsome, dashing fellows; one the son of an English nobleman, one the brother of an eminent Canadian politician, one related to a celebrated English dramatist. He ran his eye along the line, then turned to Mab, raised his cap with machine-like precision, and said: "No, I suppose you do not understand *that.* Keep Aleck Windsor from Pretty Pierre and his gang. Good-bye."

Then he mounted and rode away. Every other man in the company looked back to where the girl stood in the doorway; he did not. Private Gellatly said, with a shake of the head, as she was lost to view: "Devils bestir me, what a widdy she'll make!" It was understood that Aleck Windsor and Mab Humphrey were to be married on the coming New Year's Day. What connection was there between the words of Sergeant Fones and those of Private Gellatly? None, perhaps.

Mab thought upon that day as she looked out, this December morning, and saw Sergeant Fones dismounting at the door. David Humphrey, who was outside, offered to put up the Sergeant's horse; but he said: "No, if you'll hold him just a moment, Mr. Humphrey,

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I'll ask for a drink of something warm, and move on. Miss Humphrey is inside, I suppose?"

"She'll give you a drink of the *best* to be had on your patrol, Sergeant," was the laughing reply.

"Thanks for that, but tea or coffee is good enough for me," said the Sergeant. Entering, the coffee was soon in the hand of the hardy soldier. Once he paused in his drinking and scanned Mab's face closely. Most people would have said the Sergeant had an affair of the law in hand, and was searching the face of a criminal; but most people are not good at interpretation. Mab was speaking to the chore-girl at the same time and did not see the look. If she could have defined her thoughts when she, in turn, glanced into the Sergeant's face, a moment afterwards, she would have said, "Austerity fills this man. Isolation marks him for its own." In the eyes were only purpose, decision, and command. Was that the look that had been fixed upon her face a moment ago? It must have been. His features had not changed a breath. Mab began their talk.

"They say you are to get a Christmas present of promotion, Sergeant Fones."

"I have not seen it gazetted," he answered enigmatically.

"You and your friends will be glad of it."

"I like the service."

"You will have more freedom with a commission."

He made no reply, but rose and walked to the window, and looked out across the snow, drawing on his gauntlets as he did so.

She saw that he was looking where the grass in summer was the greenest!

He turned and said:

"I am going to barracks now. I suppose Young Aleck will be in quarters here on Christmas Day, Miss Mab?"

"I think so," and she blushed.

"Did he say he would be here?"

"Yes."

"Exactly."

He looked toward the coffee. Then:

"Thank you. . . . Good-bye."

"Sergeant?"

"Miss Humphrey!"

"Will you not come to us on Christmas Day?"

His eyelids closed swiftly and opened again.

"I shall be on duty."

"And promoted?"

"Perhaps."

"And merry and happy?"—she smiled to herself to think of Sergeant Fones being merry and happy.

"Exactly."

The word suited him.

He paused a moment with his fingers on the latch, and turned round as if to speak; pulled off his gauntlet, and then as quickly put it on again. Had he meant to offer his hand in good-bye? He had never been seen to take the hand of anyone except with the might of the law visible in steel.

He opened the door with the right hand, but turned round as he stepped out, so that the left held it while he faced the warmth of the room and the face of the girl.

The door closed.

Mounted, and having said good-bye to Mr. Humphrey, he turned towards the house, raised his cap with soldierly brusqueness, and rode away in the direction of the barracks.

The girl did not watch him. She was thinking of Young Aleck, and of Christmas Day, now near. The Sergeant did not look back.

Meantime the party at Windsor's store was broken up. Pretty Pierre and Young Aleck had talked together, and the old man had heard his son say:

"Remember, Pierre, it is for the last time."

Then they talked after this fashion:

"Ah, I know, *mon ami;* for the last time! Eh, *bien,* you will spend Christmas Day with us too—no? You surely will not leave us on the day of good fortune? Where better can you take your pleasure—for the last time? One day is not enough for farewell. Two, *three;* that is the magic number. You will, eh? no? Well, well, you will come to-morrow—and—eh, *mon ami,* where do you go the next day? Oh, *pardon,* I forgot, you spend the Christmas Day—I know. And the day of the New Year? Ah, Young Aleck, that is what they say—the devil for the devil's luck. So."

"Stop that, Pierre." There was fierceness in the tone. "I spend the Christmas Day where you don't, and as I like, and the rest doesn't concern you. I drink with you, I play with you—*bien!* As you say yourself, *bien,* isn't that enough?"

"*Pardon!* We will not quarrel. No; we spend not the Christmas Day after the same fashion, quite. Then, to-morrow at Pardon's Drive! Adieu!"

Pretty Pierre went out of one door, a malediction between his white teeth, and Aleck went out of another door with a malediction upon his gloomy lips. But both maledictions were levelled at the same person. Poor Aleck.

"Poor Aleck!" That is the way we sometimes think

of a good nature gone awry; one that has learned to say cruel maledictions to itself, and against which demons hurl their deadly maledictions too. Alas, for the ne'er-do-weel!

That night a stalwart figure passed from David Humphrey's door, carrying with him the warm atmosphere of a good woman's love. The chilly outer air of the world seemed not to touch him, Love's curtains were drawn so close. Had one stood within "the Hunter's Room," as it was called, a little while before, one would have seen a man's head bowed before a woman, and her hand smoothing back the hair from the handsome brow where dissipation had drawn some deep lines. Presently the hand raised the head until the eyes of the woman looked full into the eyes of the man.

"You will not go to Pardon's Drive again, will you, Aleck?"

"Never again after Christmas Day, Mab. But I must go to-morrow. I have given my word."

"I know. To meet Pretty Pierre and all the rest, and for what? Oh, Aleck, isn't the suspicion about your father enough, but you must put this on me as well?"

"My father must suffer for his wrong-doing if he does wrong, and I for mine."

There was a moment's silence. He bowed his head again.

"And I have done wrong to us both. Forgive me, Mab."

She leaned over and caressed his hair. "I forgive you, Aleck."

A thousand new thoughts were thrilling through him. Yet this man had given his word to do that for

which he must ask forgiveness of the woman he loved. But to Pretty Pierre, forgiven or unforgiven, he would keep his word. She understood it better than most of those who read this brief record can. Every sphere has its code of honour and duty peculiar to itself.

"You will come to me on Christmas morning, Aleck?"

"I will come on Christmas morning."

"And no more after that of Pretty Pierre?"

"And no more of Pretty Pierre."

She trusted him; but neither could reckon with unknown forces.

Sergeant Fones, sitting in the barracks in talk with Private Gellatly, said at that moment in a swift silence, "Exactly."

Pretty Pierre, at Pardon's Drive, drinking a glass of brandy at that moment, said to the ceiling:

"No more of Pretty Pierre after to-morrow night, monsieur! *Bien!* If it is for the last time, then it is for the last time. So . . . so."

He smiled. His teeth were amazingly white.

The stalwart figure strode on under the stars, the white night a lens for visions of days of rejoicing to come. All evil was far from him. The dolorous tide rolled back in this hour from his life, and he revelled in the light of a new day.

"When I've played my last card to-morrow night with Pretty Pierre, I'll begin the world again," he whispered.

And Sergeant Fones in the barracks said just then, in response to a further remark of Private Gellatly,— "Exactly."

Young Aleck fell to singing:

"Out from your vineland come
Into the prairies wild;
Here will we make our home,—
Father, mother, and child;
Come, my love, to our home,—
Father, mother, and child,
Father, mother, and—"

He fell to thinking again—"and child—and child,"—it was in his ears and in his heart.

But Pretty Pierre was singing softly to himself in the room at Pardon's Drive:

"Three good friends with the wine at night—
Vive la compagnie!
Two good friends when the sun grows bright—
Vive la compagnie!
Vive la, vive la, vive l'amour!
Vive la, vive la, vive l'amour!
Three good friends, *two* good friends—
Vive la compagnie!"

What did it mean?

Private Gellatly was cousin to Idaho Jack, and Idaho Jack disliked Pretty Pierre, though he had been one of the gang. The cousins had seen each other lately, and Private Gellatly had had a talk with the man who was *ha'sh*. It may be that others besides Pierre had an idea of what it meant.

In the house at Pardon's Drive the next night sat eight men, of whom three were Pretty Pierre, Young Aleck, and Idaho Jack. Young Aleck's face was flushed with bad liquor and the worse excitement of play. This was one of the unreckoned forces. Was this the man that sang the tender song under the stars last night? Pretty Pierre's face was less pretty than usual; the cheeks were pallid, the eyes were hard and

cold. Once he looked at his partner as if to say, "Not yet." Idaho Jack saw the look; he glanced at his watch; it was eleven o'clock. At that moment the door opened, and Sergeant Fones entered. All started to their feet, most with curses on their lips; but Sergeant Fones never seemed to hear anything that could make a feature of his face alter. Pierre's hand was on his hip, as if feeling for something. Sergeant Fones saw that; but he walked to where Aleck stood, with his unplayed cards still in his hand, and, laying a hand on his shoulder, said, "Come with me."

"Why should I go with you?"—this with a drunken man's bravado.

"You are my prisoner."

Pierre stepped forward. "What is his crime?" he exclaimed.

"How does that concern you, Pretty Pierre?"

"He is my friend."

"Is he your friend, Aleck?"

What was there in the eyes of Sergeant Fones that forced the reply,—"To-night, yes; to-morrow, no."

"Exactly. It is near to-morrow; come."

Aleck was led towards the door. Once more Pierre's hand went to his hip; but he was looking at the prisoner, not at the Sergeant. The Sergeant saw, and his fingers were at his belt. He opened the door. Aleck passed out. He followed. Two horses were tied to a post. With difficulty Aleck was mounted. Once on the way his brain began slowly to clear, but he grew painfully cold. It was a bitter night. How bitter it might have been for the ne'er-do-weel let the words of Idaho Jack, spoken in a long hour's talk next day with Old Brown Windsor, show. "Pretty Pierre, after the two were gone, said, with a shiver of curses,—'Another

hour and it would have been done, and no one to blame. He was ready for trouble. His money was nearly finished. A little quarrel easily made, the door would open, and he would pass out. His horse would be gone, he could not come back; he would walk. The air is cold, quite, quite cold; and the snow is a soft bed. He would sleep well and sound, having seen Pretty Pierre for the last time. And now—' The rest was French and furtive."

From that hour Idaho Jack and Pretty Pierre parted company.

Riding from Pardon's Drive, Young Aleck noticed at last that they were not going towards the barracks.

He said: "Why do you arrest me?"

The Sergeant replied: "You will know that soon enough. You are now going to your own home. To-morrow you will keep your word and go to David Humphrey's place; the next day I will come for you. Which do you choose: to ride with me to-night to the barracks and know why you are arrested, or go, unknowing, as I bid you, and keep your word with the girl?"

Through Aleck's fevered brain, there ran the words of the song he sang before—

"Out from your vineland come
Into the prairies wild;
Here will we make our home,—
Father, mother, and child."

He could have but one answer.

At the door of his home the Sergeant left him with the words, "Remember you are on parole."

Aleck noticed as the Sergeant rode away that the face of the sky had changed, and slight gusts of wind

had come up. At any other time his mind would have dwelt upon the fact. It did not do so now.

Christmas Day came. People said that the fiercest night, since the blizzard day of 1863, had been passed. But the morning was clear and beautiful. The sun came up like a great flower expanding. First the yellow, then the purple, then the red, and then a mighty shield of roses. The world was a blanket of drift, and down, and glistening silver.

Mab Humphrey greeted her lover with such a smile as only springs to a thankful woman's lips. He had given his word and had kept it; and the path of the future seemed surer.

He was a prisoner on parole; still that did not depress him. Plans for coming days were talked of, and the laughter of many voices filled the house. The ne'er-do-weel was clothed and in his right mind. In the Hunter's Room the noblest trophy was the heart of a repentant prodigal.

In the barracks that morning a gazetted notice was posted, announcing, with such technical language as is the custom, that Sergeant Fones was promoted to be a lieutenant in the Mounted Police Force of the North West Territory. When the officer in command sent for him he could not be found. But he was found that morning; and when Private Gellatly, with a warm hand, touching the glove of "iron and ice"—that, indeed, now said: "Sergeant Fones, you are promoted, God help you!" he gave no sign. Motionless, stern, erect, he sat there upon his horse, beside a stunted larch tree. The broncho seemed to understand, for he did not stir, and had not done so for hours; —they could tell that. The bridle rein was still in the frigid fingers, and a smile was upon the face.

A smile upon the face of Sergeant Fones!

Perhaps he smiled that he was going to the Barracks of the Free—

"*Free among the Dead like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave, that are out of remembrance.*"

In the wild night he had lost his way, though but a few miles from the barracks.

He had done his duty rigidly in that sphere of life where he had lived so much alone among his many comrades. Had he exceeded his duty once in arresting Young Aleck?

When, the next day, Sergeant Fones lay in the barracks, over him the flag for which he had sworn to do honest service, and his promotion papers in his quiet hand, the two who loved each other stood beside him for many a throbbing minute. And one said to herself, silently: "I felt sometimes"—but no more words did she say even to herself.

Old Aleck came in, and walked to where the Sergeant slept, wrapped close in that white frosted coverlet which man wears but once. He stood for a moment silent, his fingers numbly clasped.

Private Gellatly spoke softly: "Angels betide me, it's little we knew the great of him till he wint away; the pride, and the law—and the love of him."

In the tragedy that faced them this Christmas morning one at least had seen "the love of him." Perhaps the broncho had known it before.

Old Aleck laid a palm upon the hand he had never touched when it had life. "He's—too—ha'sh," he said slowly.

Private Gellatly looked up wonderingly.

But the old man's eyes were wet.

GOD'S GARRISON

GOD'S GARRISON

TWENTY years ago there was trouble at Fort o' God. "Out of this place we get betwixt the suns," said Gyng the Factor. "No help that falls abaft to-morrow could save us. Food dwindles, and ammunition's nearly gone, and they'll have the cold steel in our scalp-locks if we stay. We'll creep along the Devil's Causeway, then through the Red Horn Woods, and so across the plains to Rupert House. Whip in the dogs, Baptiste, and be ready all of you at midnight."

"And Grah the Idiot—what of him?" asked Pretty Pierre.

"He'll have to take his chance. If he can travel with us, so much the better for him"; and the Factor shrugged his shoulders.

"If not, so much the worse, eh?" returned Pretty Pierre.

"Work the sum out to suit yourself. We've got our necks to save. God'll have to help the Idiot if we can't."

"You hear, Grah Hamon, Idiot," said Pierre an hour afterwards, "we're going to leave Fort o' God and make for Rupert House. You've a dragging leg, you're gone in the savvey, you have to balance yourself with your hands as you waddle along, and you slobber when you talk; but you've got to cut away with us quick across the Beaver Plains, and Christ'll have to help you if we can't. That's what the Factor says, and that's how the case stands, Idiot—*bien?*"

"Grah want pipe—bubble—bubble—wind blow," muttered the daft one.

Pretty Pierre bent over and said slowly: "If you stay here, Grah, the Indian get your scalp; if you go, the snow is deep and the frost is like a badger's tooth, and you can't be carried."

"Oh, Oh!—my mother dead—poor Annie—by God, Grah want pipe—poor Grah sleep in snow—bubble, bubble—Oh, Oh!—the long wind, fly away."

Pretty Pierre watched the great head of the Idiot as it swung heavily on his shoulders, and then said: "*Mais*, like that, so!" and turned away.

When the party were about to sally forth on their perilous path to safety, Gyng stood and cried angrily: "Well, why hasn't some one bundled up that moth-eaten Caliban? Curse it all, must I do everything myself?"

"But you see," said Pierre, "the Caliban stays at Fort o' God."

"You've got a Christian heart in you, so help me, Heaven!" replied the other. "No, sir, we give him a chance,—and his Maker too for that matter, to show what He's willing to do for His misfits."

Pretty Pierre rejoined, "Well, I have thought. The game is all against Grah if he go; but there are two who stay at Fort o' God."

And that is how, when the Factor and his half-breeds and trappers stole away in silence towards the Devil's Causeway, Pierre and the Idiot remained behind. And that is why the flag of the H. B. C. still flew above Fort o' God in the New Year's sun just twenty years ago to-day.

The Hudson's Bay Company had never done a worse day's work than when they promoted Gyng to

be chief factor. He loathed the heathen and he showed his loathing. He had a heart harder than iron, a speech that bruised worse than the hoof of an angry moose. And when at last he drove away a band of wandering Sioux, foodless, from the stores, siege and ambush took the place of prayer, and a nasty portion fell to Fort o' God. For the Indians found a great *cache* of buffalo meat, and, having sent the women and children south with the old men, gave constant and biting assurances to Gyng that the heathen hath his hour, even though he be a dog which is refused those scraps from the white man's table which give life in the hour of need. Besides all else, there was in the Fort the thing which the gods made last to humble the pride of men—there was rum.

And the morning after Gyng and his men had departed, because it was a day when frost was master of the sun, and men grew wild for action, since to stand still was to face indignant Death, they, who camped without, prepared to make a sally upon the wooden gates. Pierre saw their intent, and hid in the ground some pemmican and all the scanty rum. Then he looked at his powder and shot, and saw that there was little left. If he spent it on the besiegers, how should they fare for beast and fowl in hungry days? And for his rifle he had but a brace of bullets. He rolled these in his hand, looking upon them with a grim smile. And the Idiot, seeing, rose and sidled towards him, and said: "Poor Grah want pipe—bubble—bubble." Then a light of childish cunning came into his eyes, and he touched the bullets blunderingly, and continued: "Plenty, plenty b'longs Grah—give poor Grah pipe—plenty, plenty, give you these."

And Pretty Pierre after a moment replied: "So

that's it, Grah?—you've got bullets stowed away? Well, I must have them. It's a one-sided game in which you get the tricks; but here's the pipe, Idiot—my only pipe for your dribbling mouth—my last good comrade. Now show me the bullets. Take me to them, daft one, quick."

A little later the Idiot sat inside the store, wrapped in loose furs, and blowing bubbles; while Pretty Pierre, with many handfuls of bullets by him, waited for the attack.

"Eh," he said, as he watched from a loophole, "Gyng and the others have got safely past the Causeway, and the rest is possible. Well, it hurts an idiot as much to die, perhaps, as a half-breed or a factor. It is good to stay here. If we fight, and go out swift like Grah's bubbles, it is the game. If we starve and sleep as did Grah's mother, then it also is the game. It is great to have all the chances against and then to win. We shall see."

With a sharp relish in his eye he watched the enemy coming slowly forward. Yet he talked almost idly to himself: "I have a thought of so long ago. A woman—she was a mother, and it was on the Madawaska River, and she said: 'Sometimes I think a devil was your father, an angel sometimes. You were begot in an hour between a fighting and a mass: between blood and heaven. And when you were born you made no cry. They said that was a sign of evil. You refused the breast, and drank only of the milk of wild cattle. In baptism you flung your hand before your face that the water might not touch, nor the priest's finger make a cross upon the water. And they said it were better if you had been born an idiot than with an evil spirit; and that your hand would be against the loins that

bore you. But Pierre, ah Pierre, you love your mother, do you not?'" . . . And he standing now, his eye closed with the gate-chink in front of Fort o' God, said quietly: "She was of the race that hated these—my mother; and she died of a wound they gave her at the Tête Blanche Hill. Well, for that you die now, Yellow Arm, if this gun has a bullet cold enough."

A bullet *pinged* through the sharp air, as the Indians swarmed towards the gate, and Yellow Arm, the chief, fell. The besiegers paused; and then, as if at the command of the fallen man, they drew back, bearing him to the camp, where they sat down and mourned.

Pierre watched them for a time; and, seeing that they made no further move, retired into the store, where the Idiot muttered and was happy after his kind. "Grah got pipe—blow away—blow away to Annie—pretty soon."

"Yes, Grah, there's chance enough that you'll blow away to Annie pretty soon," remarked the other.

"Grah have white eagles—fly, fly on the wind—oh, oh, bubble, bubble!" and he sent the filmy globes floating from the pipe that a camp of river-drivers had given the half-breed winters before.

Pierre stood and looked at the wandering eyes, behind which were the torturings of an immense and confused intelligence; a life that fell deformed before the weight of too much brain, so that all tottered from the womb into the gutters of foolishness, and the tongue mumbled of chaos when it should have told marvellous things. And the half-breed, the thought of this coming upon him, said: "Well, I think the matters of hell have fallen across the things of heaven, and there is storm. If for one moment he could think clear, it would be great."

He bethought him of a certain chant, taught him by a medicine man in childhood, which, sung to the waving of a torch in a place of darkness, caused evil spirits to pass from those possessed, and good spirits to reign in their stead. And he raised the Idiot to his feet, and brought him, maundering, to a room where no light was. He kneeled before him with a lighted torch of bear's fat and the tendons of the deer, and waving it gently to and fro, sang the ancient rune, until the eye of the Idiot, following the torch at a tangent as it waved, suddenly became fixed upon the flame, when it ceased to move. And the words of the chant ran through Grah's ears, and pierced to the remote parts of his being; and a sickening trouble came upon his face, and the lips ceased to drip, and were caught up in twinges of pain. . . . The chant rolled on: "*Go forth, go forth upon them, thou, the Scarlet Hunter! Drive them forth into the wilds, drive them crying forth! Enter in, O enter in, and lie upon the couch of peace, the couch of peace within my wigwam, thou the wise one! Behold, I call to thee!*"

And Pierre, looking upon the Idiot, saw his face glow, and his eye stream steadily to the light, and he said, "What is it that you see, Grah?—speak!"

All pitifulness and struggle had gone from the Idiot's face, and a strong calm fell upon it, and the voice of a man that God had created spoke slowly: "There is an end of blood. The great chief Yellow Arm is fallen. He goeth to the plains where his wife will mourn upon his knees, and his children cry, because he that gathered food is gone, and the pots are empty on the fire. And they who follow him shall fight no more. Two shall live through bitter days, and when the leaves shall shine in the sun again, there shall good things

befal. But one shall go upon a long journey with the singing birds in the path of the white eagle. He shall travel, and not cease until he reach the place where fools, and children, and they into whom a devil entered through the gates of birth, find the mothers who bore them. But the other goeth at a different time—" At this point the light in Pretty Pierre's hand flickered and went out, and through the darkness there came a voice, the voice of an idiot, that whimpered: "Grah want pipe—Annie, Annie dead."

The angel of wisdom was gone, and chaos spluttered on the lolling lips again; the Idiot sat feeling for the pipe that he had dropped.

And never again through the days that came and went could Pierre, by any conjuring, or any swaying torch, make the fool into a man again. The devils of confusion were returned forever. But there had been one glimpse of the god. And it was as the Idiot had said when he saw with the eyes of that god: no more blood was shed. The garrison of this fort held it unmolested. The besiegers knew not that two men only stayed within the walls; and because the chief begged to be taken south to die, they left the place surrounded by its moats of ice and its trenches of famine; and they came not back.

But other foes more deadly than the angry heathen came, and they were called Hunger and Loneliness. The one destroyeth the body and the other the brain. But Grah was not lonely, nor did he hunger. He blew his bubbles, and muttered of a wind whereon a useless thing—a film of water, a butterfly, or a fool—might ride beyond the reach of spirit, or man, or heathen. His flesh remained the same, and grew not less; but that of Pierre wasted, and his eye grew darker with

suffering. For man is only man, and hunger is a cruel thing. To give one's food to feed a fool, and to search the silent plains in vain for any living thing to kill, is a matter for angels to do and bear, and not mere mortals. But this man had a strength of his own like to his code of living, which was his own and not another's. And at last, when spring leaped gaily forth from the grey cloak of winter, and men of the H. B. C. came to relieve Fort o' God, and entered at its gates, a gaunt man, leaning on his rifle, greeted them standing like a warrior, though his body was like that of one who had lain in the grave. He answered to the name of Pierre without pride, but like a man and not as a sick woman. And huddled on the floor beside him was an idiot fondling a pipe, with a shred of pemmican at his lips.

As if in irony of man's sacrifice, the All Hail and the Master of Things permitted the fool to fulfil his own prophecy, and die of a sudden sickness in the coming-on of summer. But he of God's Garrison that remained repented not of his deed. Such men have no repentance, neither of good nor evil.

A HAZARD OF THE NORTH

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Nobody except Gregory Thorne and myself knows the history of the Man and Woman, who lived on the Height of Land, just where Dog Ear River falls into Marigold Lake. This portion of the Height of Land is a lonely country. The sun marches over it distantly, and the man of the East—the braggart—calls it outcast; but animals love it; and the shades of the long-gone trapper and *voyageur* saunter without mourning through its fastnesses. When you are in doubt, trust God's dumb creatures—and the happy dead who whisper pleasant promptings to us, and whose knowledge is mighty. Besides, the Man and Woman lived there, and Gregory Thorne says that they could recover a lost paradise. But Gregory Thorne is an insolent youth. The names of these people were John and Audrey Malbrouck; the Man was known to the makers of backwoods history as Captain John. Gregory says about that—but no, not yet!—let his first meeting with the Man and the Woman be described in his own words, unusual and flippant as they sometimes are; for though he is a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a brother of a Right Honourable, he has conceived it his duty to emancipate himself in the matter of style in language; and he has succeeded.

"It was autumn," he said, "all colours; beautiful and nippy on the Height of Land; wild ducks, the which no man could number, and bear's meat abroad in the world. I was alone. I had hunted all day, leaving my mark now and then as I journeyed, with a

cache of slaughter here, and a blazed hickory there. I was hungry as a circus tiger—did you ever eat slippery-elm bark?—yes, I was as bad as that. I guessed from what I had been told, that the Malbrouck show must be hereaway somewhere. I smelled the lake miles off —oh, you could too if you were half the animal I am; I followed my nose and the slippery-elm between my teeth, and came at a double-quick suddenly on the fair domain. There the two sat in front of the house like turtle-doves, and as silent as a middy after his first kiss. Much as I ached to get my tooth into something filling, I wished that I had 'em under my pencil, with that royal sun making a rainbow of the lake, the woods all scarlet and gold, and that mist of purple—eh, you've seen it?—and they sitting there monarchs of it all, like that duffer of a king who had operas played for his solitary benefit. But I hadn't a pencil and I had a hunger, and I said '*How!*' like any other Injin—insolent, wasn't it? Then the Man rose, and he said I was welcome, and she smiled an approving but not very immediate smile, and she kept her seat,—she kept her seat, my boy,—and that was the first thing that set me thinking. She didn't seem to be conscious that there was before her one of the latest representatives from Belgravia, not she! But when I took an honest look at her face, I understood. I'm glad that I had my hat in my hand, polite as any Frenchman on the threshold of a *blanchisserie:* for I learned very soon that the Woman had been in Belgravia too, and knew far more than I did about what was what. When she did rise to array the supper table, it struck me that if Josephine Beauharnais had been like her, she might have kept her hold on Napoleon, and saved his fortunes; made Europe France; and France the world.

I could not understand it. Jimmy Haldane had said to me when I was asking for Malbrouck's place on the compass,—'Don't put on any side with them, my Greg, or you'll take a day off for penitence.' They were both tall and good to look at, even if he was a bit rugged, with neck all wire and muscle, and had big knuckles. But she had hands like those in a picture of Velasquez, with a warm whiteness and educated—that's it, educated hands.

"She wasn't young, but she seemed so. Her eyes looked up and out at you earnestly, yet not inquisitively, and more occupied with something in her mind, than with what was before her. In short, she was a lady; not one by virtue of a visit to the gods that rule o'er Buckingham Palace, but by the claims of good breeding and long descent. She puzzled me, eluded me—she reminded me of someone; but who? Someone I liked, because I felt a thrill of admiration whenever I looked at her—but it was no use, I couldn't remember. I soon found myself talking to her according to St. James—the palace, you know—and at once I entered a bet with my beloved aunt, the dowager—who never refuses to take my offer, though she seldom wins, and she's ten thousand miles away, and has to take my word for it—that I should find out the history of this Man and Woman before another Christmas morning, which wasn't more than two months off. You know whether or not I won it, my son."

I had frequently hinted to Gregory that I was old enough to be his father, and that in calling me his son, his language was misplaced; and I repeated it at that moment. He nodded good-humouredly, and continued:

"I was born insolent, my s—my ancestor. Well,

after I had cleared a space at the supper table, and had, with permission, lighted my pipe, I began to talk. . . . Oh yes, I did give them a chance occasionally; don't interrupt. . . . I gossiped about England, France, the universe. From the brief comments they made I saw they knew all about it, and understood my social argot, all but a few words—is there anything peculiar about any of my words? After having exhausted Europe and Asia I discussed America; talked about Quebec, the folklore of the French Canadians, the *voyageurs* from old Maisonneuve down. All the history I knew I rallied, and was suddenly bowled out. For Malbrouck followed my trail from the time I began to talk, and in ten minutes he had proved me to be a baby in knowledge, an emaciated baby; he eliminated me from the equation. He first tripped me on the training of naval cadets; then on the Crimea; then on the taking of Quebec; then on the Franco-Prussian War; then, with a sudden round-up, on India. I had been trusting to vague outlines of history; I felt when he began to talk that I was dealing with a man who not only knew history, but had lived it. He talked in the fewest but directest words, and waxed eloquent in a blunt and colossal way. But seeing his wife's eyes fixed on him intently, he suddenly pulled up, and no more did I get from him on the subject. He stopped so suddenly that in order to help over the awkwardness, though I'm not really sure there was any, I began to hum a song to myself. Now, upon my soul, I didn't think what I was humming; it was some subterranean association of things, I suppose—but that doesn't matter here. I only state it to clear myself of any unnecessary insolence. These were the words I was maundering with this noble voice of mine:

"'The news I bring, fair Lady,
Will make your tears run down—

Put off your rose-red dress so fine
And doff your satin gown!

Monsieur Malbrouck is dead, alas!
And buried, too, for aye;

I saw four officers who bore
His mighty corse away.
. . . . . .
We saw above the laurels,
His soul fly forth amain.

And each one fell upon his face
And then rose up again.

And so we sang the glories,
For which great Malbrouck bled;
Mironton, Mironton, Mirontaine,
Great Malbrouck, he is dead.'

"I felt the silence grow peculiar, uncomfortable. I looked up. Mrs. Malbrouck was rising to her feet with a look in her face that would make angels sorry —a startled, sorrowful thing that comes from a sleeping pain. What an ass I was! Why, the Man's name was Malbrouck; her name was Malbrouck—awful insolence! But surely there was something in the story of the song itself that had moved her. As I afterward knew, that was it. Malbrouck sat still and unmoved, though I thought I saw something stern and masterful in his face as he turned to me; but again instantly his eyes were bent on his wife with a comforting and affectionate expression. She disappeared into the house. Hoping to make it appear that I hadn't noticed anything, I dropped my voice a little and went on, intending, however, to stop at the end of the verse:

"'Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, Mironton, Mirontaine!'

I ended there; because Malbrouck's heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and he said: 'If you please, not that song.'

"I suspect I acted like an idiot. I stammered out apologies, went down on my litanies, figuratively speaking, and was all the same confident that my excuses were making bad infernally worse. But somehow the old chap had taken a liking to me.—No, of course you couldn't understand that. Not that he was so old, you know; but he had the way of retired royalty about him, as if he had lived life up to the hilt, and was all pulse and granite. Then he began to talk in his quiet way about hunting and fishing; about stalking in the Highlands and tiger-hunting in India; and wound up with some wonderful stuff about moose-hunting, *the* sport of Canada. This made me itch like sin, just to get my fingers on a trigger, with a full moose-yard in view. I can feel it now—the bound in the blood as I caught at Malbrouck's arm and said: 'By George, I must kill moose; that's sport for Vikings, and I was meant to be a Viking—or a gladiator.' Malbrouck at once replied that he would give me some moose-hunting in December if I would come up to Marigold Lake. I couldn't exactly reply on the instant, because, you see, there wasn't much chance for board and lodging thereabouts, unless—but he went on to say that I should make his house my 'public,'—perhaps he *didn't* say it quite in those terms,—that he and his wife would be glad to have me. With a couple of Indians we could go north-west, where the moose-yards were, and have some sport both exciting and prodigious. Well, I'm a muff, I know, but I didn't

refuse that. Besides, I began to see the safe side of the bet I had made with my aunt, the dowager, and I was more than pleased with what had come to pass so far. Lucky for you, too, you yarn-spinner, that the thing did develop so, or you wouldn't be getting fame and shekels out of the results of my story.

"Well, I got one thing out of the night's experience; and it was that the Malbroucks were no plebs., that they had had their day where plates are blue and gold and the spoons are solid coin. But what had sent them up here among the moose, the Indians, and the conies—whatever *they* are? How should I get at it? Insolence, you say? Yes, that. I should come up here in December, and I should mulct my aunt in the price of a new breech-loader. But I found out nothing the next morning, and I left with a paternal benediction from Malbrouck, and a smile from his wife that sent my blood tingling as it hadn't tingled since a certain season in London, which began with my tuneful lyre sounding hopeful numbers and ended with it hanging on the willows.

"When I thought it all over, as I trudged back on yesterday's track, I concluded that I had told them all my history from my youth up until now, and had got nothing from them in return. I had exhausted my family records, bit by bit, like a curate in his first parish; and had gone so far as to testify that one of my ancestors had been banished to Australia for political crimes. Distinctly they had me at an advantage, though, to be sure, I had betrayed Mrs. Malbrouck into something more than a suspicion of emotion.

"When I got back to my old camp, I could find out nothing from the other fellows; but Jacques Pontiac told me that his old mate, Pretty Pierre, who in recent

days had fallen from grace, knew something of these people that no one else guessed, because he had let them a part of his house in the parish of St. Genevieve in Quebec, years before. Pierre had testified to one fact, that a child—a girl—had been born to Mrs. Malbrouck in his house, but all further knowledge he had withheld. Pretty Pierre was off in the Rocky Mountains practising his profession—chiefly poker—and was not available for information. What did I, Gregory Thorne, want of the information anyway? That's the point, my son. Judging from after-developments I suppose it was what the foolish call occult sympathy. Well, where was that girl-child? Jacques Pontiac didn't know. Nobody knew. And I couldn't get rid of Mrs. Malbrouck's face; it haunted me; the broad brow, deep eyes, and high-bred sweetness—all beautifully animal. Don't laugh: I find astonishing likenesses between the perfectly human and the perfectly animal. Did you never see how beautiful and modest the faces of deer are; how *chic* and sensitive is the manner of a hound; nor the keen, warm look in the eye of a well-bred mare? Why, I'd rather be a good horse of blood and temper than half the fellows I know. You are not an animal lover as I am; yes, even when I shoot them or fight them I admire them, just as I'd admire a swordsman who, in *quart*, would give me death by the wonderful upper thrust. It's all a battle; all a game of love and slaughter, my son, and both go together.

"Well, as I say, her face followed me. Watch how the thing developed. By the prairie-track I went over to Fort Desire, near the Rockies, almost immediately after this, to see about buying a ranch with my old chum at Trinity, Polly Cliffshawe—Polydore, you

know. Whom should I meet in a hut on the ranch but Jacques's friend, Pretty Pierre. This was luck; but he was not like Jacques Pontiac, he was secretive as a Buddhist deity. He had a good many of the characteristics that go to a fashionable diplomatist: clever, wicked, cool, and in speech doing the vanishing trick just when you wanted him. But my star of fortune was with me. One day Silverbottle, an Indian, being in a murderous humour, put a bullet in Pretty Pierre's leg, and would have added another, only I stopped it suddenly. While in his bed he told me what he knew of the Malbroucks.

"This is the fashion of it. John and Audrey Malbrouck had come to Quebec in the year 1865, and sojourned in the parish of St. Genevieve, in the house of the mother of Pretty Pierre. Of an inquiring turn of mind, the French half-breed desired to know concerning the history of these English people, who, being poor, were yet gentle, and spoke French with a grace and accent which was to the French-Canadian *patois* as Shakespeare's English is to that of Seven Dials. Pierre's methods of inquisitiveness were not strictly dishonest. He did not open letters, he did not besiege dispatch-boxes, he did not ask impudent questions; he watched and listened. In his own way he found out that the man had been a soldier in the ranks, and that he had served in India. They were most attached to the child, whose name was Marguerite. One day a visitor, a lady, came to them. She seemed to be the cause of much unhappiness to Mrs. Malbrouck. And Pierre was alert enough to discover that this distinguished-looking person desired to take the child away with her. To this the young mother would not consent, and the visitor departed with some

chillingly-polite phrases,—part English, part French,—beyond the exact comprehension of Pierre, and leaving the father and mother and little Marguerite happy. Then, however, these people seemed to become suddenly poorer, and Malbrouck began farming in a humble, but not entirely successful way. The energy of the man was prodigious; but his luck was sardonic. Floods destroyed his first crops, prices ran low, debt accumulated, foreclosure of mortgage occurred, and Malbrouck and the wife and child went west.

"Five years later, Pretty Pierre saw them again at Marigold Lake: Malbrouck as agent for the Hudson's Bay Company—still poor, but contented. It was at this period that the former visitor again appeared, clothed in purple and fine linen, and, strange as it may seem, succeeded in carrying off the little child, leaving the father and mother broken, but still devoted to each other.

"Pretty Pierre closed his narration with these words: '*Bien*, that Malbrouck, he is great. I have not much love of men, but he—well, if he say,—"See, Pierre, I go to the home of the white bear and the winter that never ends; perhaps we come back, perhaps we die; but there will be sport for men—"*voilà!* I would go. To know one strong man in this world is good. Perhaps, some time I will go to him—yes, Pierre, the gambler, will go to him, and say: It is good for the wild dog that he live near the lion. And the child, she was beautiful; she had a light heart and a sweet way.' "

It was with this slight knowledge that Gregory Thorne set out on his journey over the great Canadian prairie to Marigold Lake, for his December moose-hunt.

Gregory has since told me that, as he travelled with

Jacques Pontiac across the Height of Land to his destination, he had uncomfortable feelings; presentiments, peculiar reflections of the past, and melancholy —a thing far from habitual with him. Insolence is all very well, but you cannot apply it to indefinite thoughts; it isn't effective with vague presentiments. And when Gregory's insolence was taken away from him, he was very like other mortals; virtue had gone out of him; his brown cheek and frank eye had lost something of their charm. It was these unusual broodings that worried him; he waked up suddenly one night calling, "Margaret! Margaret!" like any childlike lover. And that did not please him. He believed in things that, as he said himself, "he could get between his fingers;" he had little sympathy with morbid sentimentalities. But there *was* an English Margaret in his life; and he, like many another childlike man, had fallen in love, and with her—very much in love indeed; and a star had crossed his love to a degree that greatly shocked him and pleased the girl's relatives. She was the granddaughter of a certain haughty dame of high degree, who regarded icily this poorest of younger sons, and held her darling aloof. Gregory, very like a blunt unreasoning lover, sought to carry the redoubt by wild assault; and was overwhelmingly routed. The young lady, though finding some avowed pleasure in his company, accompanied by brilliant misunderstanding of his advances and full-front speeches, had never given him enough encouragement to warrant his playing young Lochinvar in Park Lane; and his cup became full when, at the close of the season, she was whisked off to the seclusion of a country-seat, whose walls to him were impregnable. His defeat was then, and afterwards, complete. He

pluckily replied to the derision of his relatives with multiplied derision, demanded his inheritance, got his traps together, bought a fur coat, and straightway sailed the wintry seas to Canada.

His experiences had not soured his temper. He believed that every dog has his day, and that Fate was very malicious; that it brought down the proud, and rewarded the patient; that it took up its abode in marble halls, and was the mocker at the feast. All this had reference, of course, to the time when he should—rich as any nabob—return to London, and be victorious over his enemy in Park Lane. It was singular that he believed this thing would occur; but he did. He had not yet made his fortune, but he had been successful in the game of buying and selling lands, and luck seemed to dog his path. He was fearless, and he had a keen eye for all the points of every game—every game but love.

Yet he was born to succeed in that game too. For though his theory was, that everything should be treated with impertinence before you could get a proper view of it, he was markedly respectful to people. Few could resist him; his impudence of ideas was so pleasantly mixed with delicately suggested admiration of those to whom he talked. It was impossible that John Malbrouck and his wife could have received him other than they did; his was the eloquent, conquering spirit.

II

By the time he reached Lake Marigold he had shaken off all those hovering fancies of the woods, which, after all, might only have been the whisperings of

those friendly and far-seeing spirits who liked the lad as he journeyed through their lonely pleasure-grounds. John Malbrouck greeted him with quiet cordiality, and Mrs. Malbrouck smiled upon him with a different smile from that with which she had speeded him a month before; there was in it a new light of knowledge, and Gregory could not understand it. It struck him as singular that the lady should be dressed in finer garments than she wore when he last saw her; though certainly her purple became her. She wore it as if born to it; and with an air more sedately courteous than he had ever seen, save at one house in Park Lane. Had this rustle of fine trappings been made for him? No; the woman had a mind above such snobbishness, he thought. He suffered for a moment the pang of a cynical idea; but the eyes of Mrs. Malbrouck were on him and he knew that he was as nothing before her. Her eyes—how they were fixed upon him! Only two women had looked so truthfully at him before: his dead mother and—Margaret. And Margaret—why, how strangely now at this instant came the thought that she was like his Margaret! Wonder sprang to his eyes. At that moment a door opened and a girl entered the room—a girl lissome, sweet-faced, well-bred of manner, who came slowly towards them.

"My daughter, Mr. Thorne," the mother briefly remarked. There was no surprise in the girl's face, only an even reserve of pleasure, as she held out her hand and said: "Mr. Gregory Thorne and I are old—enemies." Gregory Thorne's nerve forsook him for an instant. He knew now the reason of his vague presentiments in the woods; he understood why, one night, when he had been more childlike than usual in his memory of the one woman who could make life

joyous for him, the voice of a *voyageur*, not Jacques's nor that of any one in camp, sang:

"My dear love, she waits for me,
None other my world is adorning;
My true love I come to thee,
My dear, the white star of the morning.
Eagles spread out your wings,—
Behold where the red dawn is breaking!
Hark, 'tis my darling sings,
The flowers, the song-birds awaking;
See, where she comes to me,
My love, ah, my dear love!"

And here she was. He raised her hand to his lips, and said: "Miss Carley, you have your enemy at an advantage."

"Miss Carley in Park Lane, Margaret Malbrouck here in my old home," she replied.

There ran swiftly through the young man's brain the brief story that Pretty Pierre had told him. This, then, was the child who had been carried away, and who, years after, had made captive his heart in London town! Well, one thing was clear, the girl's mother here seemed inclined to be kinder to him than was the guardian grandmother—if she *was* the grandmother—because they had their first talk undisturbed, it may be encouraged; amiable mothers do such deeds at times.

"And now pray, Mr. Thorne," she continued, "may I ask how came you here in my father's house after having treated me so cavalierly in London?—not even sending a *P. P. C.* when you vanished from your worshippers in Vanity Fair."

"As for my being here, it is simply a case of blind fate; as for my friends, the only one I wanted to be

sorry for my going was behind earthworks which I could not scale in order to leave my card, or—or anything else of more importance; and being left as it were to the inclemency of a winter world, I fled from—"

She interrupted him. "What! the conqueror, you, flying from your Moscow?"

He felt rather helpless under her gay raillery; but he said:

"Well, I didn't burn my kremlin behind me."

"Your kremlin?"

"My ships, then: they—they are just the same," he earnestly pleaded. Foolish youth, to attempt to take such a heart by surprise and storm!

"That is very interesting," she said, "but hardly wise. To make fortunes and be happy in new countries, one should forget the old ones. Meditation is the enemy of action."

"There's one meditation could make me conquer the North Pole, if I could but grasp it definitely."

"Grasp the North Pole? That would be awkward for your friends and gratifying to your enemies, if one may believe science and history. But, perhaps, you are in earnest after all, poor fellow! for my father tells me you are going over the hills and far away to the moose-yards. How valiant you are, and how quickly you grasp the essentials of fortune-making!"

"Miss Malbrouck, I *am* in earnest, and I've always been in earnest in one thing at least. I came out here to make money, and I've made some, and shall make more; but just now the moose are as brands for the burning, and I have a gun sulky for want of exercise."

"What an eloquent warrior-temper! And to whom are your deeds of valour to be dedicated? Before whom do you intend to lay your trophies of the chase?"

"Before the most provoking but worshipful lady that I know."

"Who is the sylvan maid? What princess of the glade has now the homage of your impressionable heart, Mr. Thorne?"

And Gregory Thorne, his native insolence standing him in no stead, said very humbly:

"You are that sylvan maid, that princess—ah, is this fair to me, is it fair, I ask you?"

"You really mean that about the trophies?" she replied. "And shall you return like the mighty khans, with captive tigers and lions, led by stalwart slaves, in your train, or shall they be captive moose or grizzlies?"

"Grizzlies are not possible here," he said, with cheerful seriousness, "but the moose is possible, and more, if you would be kinder—Margaret."

"Your supper, see, is ready," she said. "I venture to hope your appetite has not suffered because of long absence from your friends."

He could only dumbly answer by a protesting motion of the hand, and his smile was not remarkably buoyant.

The next morning they started on their moose-hunt. Gregory Thorne was cast down when he crossed the threshold into the winter morning without hand-clasp or god-speed from Margaret Malbrouck; but Mrs. Malbrouck was there, and Gregory, looking into her eyes, thought how good a thing it would be for him, if some such face looked benignly out on him every morning, before he ventured forth into the deceitful day. But what was the use of wishing! Margaret evidently did not care. And though the air was clear and the sun shone brightly, he felt there was a cheerless wind

blowing on him; a wind that chilled him; and he hummed to himself bitterly a song of the *voyageurs:*

"O, O, the winter wind, the North wind,—
My snow-bird, where art thou gone?
O, O, the wailing wind the night wind,—
The cold nest; I am alone.
O, O, my snow-bird!

"O, O, the waving sky, the white sky,—
My snow-bird thou fliest far;
O, O, the eagle's cry, the wild cry,—
My lost love, my lonely star.
O, O, my snow-bird!"

He was about to start briskly forward to join Malbrouck and his Indians, who were already on their way, when he heard his name called, and, turning, he saw Margaret in the doorway, her fingers held to the tips of her ears, as yet unused to the frost. He ran back to where she stood, and held out his hand. "I was afraid," he bluntly said, "that you wouldn't forsake your morning sleep to say good-bye to me."

"It isn't always the custom, is it," she replied, "for ladies to send the very early hunter away with a tally-ho? But since you have the grace to be afraid of anything, I can excuse myself to myself for fleeing the pleasantest dreams to speed you on your warlike path."

At this he brightened very much, but she, as if repenting she had given him so much pleasure, added: "I wanted to say good-bye to my father, you know; and—" she paused.

"And?" he added.

"And to tell him that you have fond relatives in the old land who would mourn your early taking off; and,

therefore, to beg him, for their sakes, to keep you safe from any outrageous moose that mightn't know how the world needed you."

"But there you are mistaken," he said; "I haven't anyone who would really care, worse luck! except the dowager; and she, perhaps, would be consoled to know that I had died in battle,—even with a moose,—and was clear of the possibility of hanging another lost reputation on the family tree, to say nothing of suspension from any other kind of tree. But, if it should be the other way; if I should see your father in the path of an outrageous moose—what then?"

"My father is a hunter born," she responded; "he is a great man," she proudly added.

"Of course, of course," he replied. "Good-bye. I'll take him your love.—Good-bye!" and he turned away.

"Good-bye," she gaily replied; and yet, one looking closely would have seen that this stalwart fellow was pleasant to her eyes, and as she closed the door to his hand waving farewell to her from the pines, she said, reflecting on his words:

"You'll take him my love, will you? But, Master Gregory, you carry a freight of which you do not know the measure; and, perhaps, you never shall, though you are very brave and honest, and not so impudent as you used to be,—and I'm not so sure that I like you so much better for that either, Monsieur Gregory."

Then she went and laid her cheek against her mother's, and said: "They've gone away for big game, mother dear; what shall be our quarry?"

"My child," the mother replied, "the story of our lives since last you were with me is my only quarry.

I want to know from your own lips all that you have been in that life which once was mine also, but far away from me now, even though you come from it, bringing its memories without its messages."

"Dear, do you think that life there was so sweet to me? It meant as little to your daughter as to you. She was always a child of the wild woods. What rustle of pretty gowns is pleasant as the silken shiver of the maple leaves in summer at this door? The happiest time in that life was when we got away to Holwood or Marchurst, with the balls and calls all over."

Mrs. Malbrouck smoothed her daughter's hand gently and smiled approvingly.

"But that old life of yours, mother; what was it? You said that you would tell me some day. Tell me now. Grandmother was fond of me—poor grandmother! But she would never tell me anything. How I longed to be back with you! . . . Sometimes you came to me in my sleep, and called to me to come with you; and then again, when I was gay in the sunshine, you came, and only smiled but never beckoned; though your eyes seemed to me very sad, and I wondered if mine would not also become sad through looking in them so—are they sad, mother?" And she laughed up brightly into her mother's face.

"No, dear; they are like the stars. You ask me for my part in that life. I will tell you soon, but not now. Be patient. Do you not tire of this lonely life? Are you truly not anxious to return to—"

"'To the husks that the swine did eat?' No, no, no; for, see: I was born for a free, strong life; the prairie or the wild wood, or else to live in some far castle in Welsh mountains, where I should never hear

the voice of the social *Thou must!*—oh, what a *must!* never to be quite free or natural. To be the slave of the code. I was born—I know not how! but so longing for the sky, and space, and endless woods. I think I never saw an animal but I loved it, nor ever lounged the mornings out at Holwood but I wished it were a hut on the mountain side, and you and father with me." Here she whispered, in a kind of awe: "And yet to think that Holwood is now mine, and that I am mistress there, and that I must go back to it—if only you would go back with me . . . ah, dear, isn't it your duty to go back with me?" she added, hesitatingly.

Audrey Malbrouck drew her daughter hungrily to her bosom, and said: "Yes, dear, I will go back, if it chances that you need me; but your father and I have lived the best days of our lives here, and we are content. But, my Margaret, there is another to be thought of too, is there not? And in that case is my duty then so clear?"

The girl's hand closed on her mother's, and she knew her heart had been truly read.

III

The hunters pursued their way, swinging grandly along on their snow-shoes, as they made for the Wild Hawk Woods. It would seem as if Malbrouck was testing Gregory's strength and stride, for the march that day was a long and hard one. He was equal to the test, and even Big Moccasin, the chief, grunted sound approval. But every day brought out new capacities for endurance and larger resources; so that Malbrouck, who had known the clash of civilisation with barbarian

battle, and deeds both dour and doughty, and who loved a man of might, regarded this youth with increasing favour. By simple processes he drew from Gregory his aims and ambitions, and found the real courage and power behind the front of irony—the language of manhood and culture which was crusted by free and easy idioms. Now and then they saw moose-tracks, but they were some days out before they came to a moose-yard—a spot hoof-beaten by the moose; his home, from which he strays, and to which he returns at times like a repentant prodigal. Now the sport began. The dog-trains were put out of view, and Big Moccasin and another Indian went off immediately to explore the country round about. A few hours, and word was brought that there was a small herd feeding not far away. Together they crept stealthily within range of the cattle. Gregory Thorne's blood leaped as he saw the noble quarry, with their wide-spread horns, sniffing the air, in which they had detected something unusual. Their leader, a colossal beast, stamped with his forefoot, and threw back his head with a snort.

"The first shot belongs to you, Mr. Thorne," said Malbrouck. "In the shoulder, you know. You have him in good line. I'll take the heifer."

Gregory showed all the coolness of an old hunter, though his lips twitched slightly with excitement. He took a short but steady aim, and fired. The beast plunged forward and then fell on his knees. The others broke away. Malbrouck fired and killed a heifer, and then all ran in pursuit as the moose made for the woods.

Gregory, in the pride of his first slaughter, sprang away towards the wounded leader, which, sunk to the

earth, was shaking its great horns to and fro. When at close range, he raised his gun to fire again, but the moose rose suddenly, and with a wild bellowing sound rushed at Gregory, who knew full well that a straight stroke from those hoofs would end his moose-hunting days. He fired, but to no effect. He could not, like a toreador, jump aside, for those mighty horns would sweep too wide a space. He dropped on his knees swiftly, and as the great antlers almost touched him, and he could feel the roaring breath of the mad creature in his face, he slipped a cartridge in, and fired as he swung round; but at that instant a dark body bore him down. He was aware of grasping those sweeping horns, conscious of a blow which tore the flesh from his chest; and then his knife—how came it in his hand? —with the instinct of the true hunter. He plunged it once, twice, past a foaming mouth, into that firm body, and then both fell together; each having fought valiantly after his kind.

Gregory dragged himself from beneath the still heaving body, and stretched to his feet; but a blindness came, and the next knowledge he had was of brandy being poured slowly between his teeth, and of a voice coming through endless distances: "A fighter, a born fighter," it said. "The pluck of Lucifer—good boy!"

Then the voice left those humming spaces of infinity, and said: "Tilt him this way a little, Big Moccasin. There, press firmly, so. Now the band steady —together—tighter—now the withes—a little higher up—cut them here." There was a slight pause, and then: "There, that's as good as an army surgeon could do it. He'll be as sound as a bell in two weeks. Eh, well, how do you feel now? Better? That's

right! Like to be on your feet, would you? Wait. Here, a sup of this. There you are. . . . Well?"

"Well," said the young man, faintly, "he was a beauty."

Malbrouck looked at him a moment, thoughtfully, and then said: "Yes, he was a beauty."

"I want a dozen more like him, and then I shall be able to drop 'em as neat as you do."

"H'm! the order is large. I'm afraid we shall have to fill it at some other time;" and Malbrouck smiled a little grimly.

"What! only one moose to take back to the Height of Land, to—" something in the eye of the other stopped him.

"To? Yes, to?" and now the eye had a suggestion of humour.

"To show I'm not a tenderfoot."

"Yes, to show you're not a tenderfoot. I fancy that will be hardly necessary. Oh, you *will* be up, eh? Well!"

"Well, I'm a tottering imbecile. What's the matter with my legs?—my prophetic soul, it hurts! Oh, I see; that's where the old warrior's hoof caught me sideways. Now, I'll tell you what, I'm going to have another moose to take back to Marigold Lake."

"Oh?"

"Yes. I'm going to take back a young, live moose."

"A significant ambition. For what?—a sacrifice to the gods you have offended in your classic existence?"

"Both. A peace-offering, and a sacrifice to—a goddess."

"Young man," said the other, the light of a smile playing on his lips, "'Prosperity be thy page!' Big Moccasin, what of this young live moose?"

The Indian shook his head doubtfully.

"But I tell you I shall have that live moose, if I have to stay here to see it grow."

And Malbrouck liked his pluck, and wished him good luck. And the good luck came. They travelled back slowly to the Height of Land, making a circuit. For a week they saw no more moose; but meanwhile Gregory's hurt quickly healed. They had now left only eight days in which to get back to Dog Ear River and Marigold Lake. If the young moose was to come it must come soon. It came soon.

They chanced upon a moose-yard, and while the Indians were beating the woods, Malbrouck and Gregory watched.

Soon a cow and a young moose came swinging down to the embankment. Malbrouck whispered: "Now if you must have your live moose, here's a lasso. I'll bring down the cow. The young one's horns are not large. Remember, no pulling. I'll do that. Keep your broken chest and bad arm safe. Now!"

Down came the cow with a plunge into the yard—dead. The lasso, too, was over the horns of the calf, and in an instant Malbrouck was swinging away with it over the snow. It was making for the trees—exactly what Malbrouck desired. He deftly threw the rope round a sapling, but not too taut, lest the moose's horns should be injured. The plucky animal now turned on him. He sprang behind a tree, and at that instant he heard the thud of hoofs behind him. He turned to see a huge bull-moose bounding towards him. He was between two fires, and quite unarmed. Those hoofs had murder in them. But at the instant a rifle shot rang out, and he only caught the forward rush of the antlers as the beast fell.

The young moose now had ceased its struggles, and came forward to the dead bull with that hollow sound of mourning peculiar to its kind. Though it afterwards struggled once or twice to be free, it became docile and was easily taught, when its anger and fear were over.

And Gregory Thorne had his live moose. He had also, by that splendid shot, achieved with one arm, saved Malbrouck from peril, perhaps from death.

They drew up before the house at Marigold Lake on the afternoon of the day before Christmas, a triumphal procession. The moose was driven, a peaceful captive with a wreath of cedar leaves around its neck—the humourous conception of Gregory Thorne. Malbrouck had announced their coming by a blast from his horn, and Margaret was standing in the doorway wrapped in furs, which may have come originally from Hudson's Bay, but which had been deftly re-manufactured in Regent Street.

Astonishment, pleasure, beamed in her eyes. She clapped her hands gaily, and cried: "Welcome, welcome, merry-men all!" She kissed her father; she called to her mother to come and see; then she said to Gregory, with arch raillery, as she held out her hand: "Oh, companion of hunters, comest thou like Jacques in Arden from dropping the trustful tear upon the prey of others, or bringest thou quarry of thine own? Art thou a warrior sated with spoil, master of the sports, spectator of the fight, Prince, or Pistol? Answer, what art thou?"

And he, with a touch of his old insolence, though with something of irony too, for he had hoped for a different fashion of greeting, said:

"All, lady, all! The Olympian all! The player of

many parts. I am Touchstone, Jacques, and yet Orlando too."

"And yet Orlando too, my daughter," said Malbrouck, gravely. "He saved your father from the hoofs of a moose bent on sacrifice. Had your father his eye, his nerve, his power to shoot with one arm a bull moose at long range, so!—he would not refuse to be called a great hunter, but wear the title gladly."

Margaret Malbrouck's face became anxious instantly. "He saved you from danger—from injury, father?" she slowly said, and looked earnestly at Gregory; "but why to shoot with one arm only?"

"Because in a fight of his own with a moose—a hand-to-hand fight—he had a bad moment with the hoofs of the beast."

And this young man, who had a reputation for insolence, blushed, so that the paleness which the girl now noticed in his face was banished; and to turn the subject he interposed:

"Here is the live moose that I said I should bring. Now say that he's a beauty, please. Your father and I—"

But Malbrouck interrupted:

"He lassoed it with his one arm, Margaret. He was determined to do it himself, because, being a superstitious gentleman, as well as a hunter, he had some foolish notion that this capture would propitiate a goddess whom he imagined required offerings of the kind."

"It is the privilege of the gods to be merciful," she said. "This peace-offering should propitiate the angriest, cruellest goddess in the universe; and for one who was neither angry nor really cruel—well, she should be satisfied . . . altogether satisfied," she added, as

she put her cheek against the warm fur of the captive's neck, and let it feel her hand with its lips.

There was silence for a minute, and then with his old gay spirit all returned, and as if to give an air not too serious to the situation, Gregory, remembering his Euripides, said:

> . . . "let the steer bleed,
> And the rich altars, as they pay their vows,
> Breathe incense to the gods: for me, I rise
> To better life, and grateful own the blessing."

"A pagan thought for a Christmas Eve," she said to him, with her fingers feeling for the folds of silken flesh in the throat of the moose; "but wounded men must be humoured. And, mother dear, here are our Argonauts returned; and—and now I think I will go."

With a quick kiss on her father's cheek—not so quick but he caught the tear that ran through her happy smile—she vanished into the house.

That night there was gladness in this home. Mirth sprang to the lips of the men like foam on a beaker of wine, so that the evening ran towards midnight swiftly. All the tale of the hunt was given by Malbrouck to joyful ears; for the mother lived again her youth in the sunrise of this romance which was being sped before her eyes; and the father, knowing that in this world there is nothing so good as courage, nothing so base as the shifting eye, looked on the young man, and was satisfied, and told his story well; —told it as a brave man would tell it, bluntly as to deeds done, warmly as to the pleasures of good sport, directly as to all. In the eye of the young man there had come the glance of larger life, of a new-developed manhood. When he felt that dun body crashing on

him, and his life closing with its strength, and ran the good knife home, there flashed through his mind how much life meant to the dying, how much it ought to mean to the living; and then this girl, this Margaret, swam before his eyes—and he had been graver since.

He knew, as truly as if she had told him, that she could never mate with any man who was a loiterer on God's highway, who could live life without some sincerity in his aims. It all came to him again in this room, so austere in its appointments, yet so gracious, so full of the spirit of humanity without a note of *ennui*, or the rust of careless deeds. As this thought grew he looked at the face of the girl, then at the faces of the father and mother, and the memory of his boast came back—that he would win the stake he laid, to know the story of John and Audrey Malbrouck before this coming Christmas morning. With a faint smile at his own past insolent self, he glanced at the clock. It was eleven. "I have lost my bet," he unconsciously said aloud.

He was roused by John Malbrouck remarking: "Yes, you have lost your bet? Well, what was it?"

The youth, the childlike quality in him, flushed his face deeply, and then, with a sudden burst of frankness, he said:

"I did not know that I had spoken. As for the bet, I deserve to be thrashed for ever having made it; but, duffer as I am, I want you to know that I'm something worse than duffer. The first time I met you I made a bet that I should know your history before Christmas Day. I haven't a word to say for myself. I'm contemptible. I beg your pardon; for your history is none of my business. I was really interested; that's all; but your lives, I believe it, as if

it was in the Bible, have been great—yes, that's the word! and I'm a better chap for having known you, though, perhaps, I've known you all along, because, you see, I've— I've been friends with your daughter —and—well, really I haven't anything else to say, except that I hope you'll forgive me, and let me know you always."

Malbrouck regarded him for a moment with a grave smile, and then looked toward his wife. Both turned their glances quickly upon Margaret, whose eyes were on the fire. The look upon her face was very gentle; something new and beautiful had come to reign there.

A moment, and Malbrouck spoke: "You did what was youthful and curious, but not wrong; and you shall not lose your hazard. I—"

"No, do not tell me," Gregory interrupted; "only let me be pardoned."

"As I said, lad, you shall not lose your hazard. I will tell you the brief tale of two lives."

"But, I beg of you! For the instant I forgot. I have more to confess." And Gregory told them in substance what Pretty Pierre had disclosed to him in the Rocky Mountains.

When he had finished, Malbrouck said: "My tale then is briefer still: I was a common soldier, English and humble by my mother, French and noble through my father—noble, but poor. In Burmah, at an outbreak among the natives, I rescued my colonel from immediate and horrible death, though he died in my arms from the injuries he received. His daughter too, it was my fortune, through God's Providence, to save from great danger. She became my wife. You remember that song you sang the day we first met you? It brought her father back to mind painfully. When

we came to England her people—her mother—would not receive me. For myself I did not care; for my wife, that was another matter. She loved me and preferred to go with me anywhere; to a new country, preferably. We came to Canada.

"We were forgotten in England. Time moves so fast, even if the records in red-books stand. Our daughter went to her grandmother to be brought up and educated in England—though it was a sore trial to us both—that she might fill nobly that place in life for which she is destined. With all she learned she did not forget us. We were happy save in her absence. We are happy now; not because she is mistress of Holwood and Marchurst—for her grandmother and another is dead—but because such as she is our daughter, and—"

He said no more. Margaret was beside him, and her fingers were on his lips.

Gregory came to his feet suddenly, and with a troubled face.

"Mistress of Holwood and Marchurst!" he said; and his mind ran over his own great deficiencies, and the list of eligible and anxious suitors that Park Lane could muster. He had never thought of her in the light of a great heiress.

But he looked down at her as she knelt at her father's knee, her eyes upturned to his, and the tide of his fear retreated; for he saw in them the same look she had given him when she leaned her cheek against the moose's neck that afternoon.

When the clock struck twelve upon a moment's pleasant silence, John Malbrouck said to Gregory Thorne:

"Yes, you have won your Christmas hazard, my boy."

But a softer voice than his whispered:

"Are you—content—Gregory?"

The Spirits of Christmas-tide, whose paths lie north as well as south, smiled as they wrote his answer on their tablets; for they knew, as the man said, that he would always be content, and—which is more in the sight of angels—that the woman would be content also.

A PRAIRIE VAGABOND

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Little Hammer was not a success. He was a disappointment to the missionaries; the officials of the Hudson's Bay Company said he was "no good;" the Mounted Police kept an eye on him; the Crees and Blackfeet would have nothing to do with him; and the half-breeds were profane regarding him. But Little Hammer was oblivious to any depreciation of his merits, and would not be suppressed. He loved the Hudson's Bay Company's Post at Yellow Quill with an unwavering love; he ranged the half-breed hospitality of Red Deer River, regardless of it being thrown at him as he in turn threw it at his dog; he saluted Sergeant Gellatly with a familiar *How!* whenever he saw him; he borrowed *tabac* of the half-breed women, and, strange to say, paid it back—with other *tabac* got by daily petition, until his prayer was granted, at the H. B. C. Post. He knew neither shame nor defeat, but where women were concerned he kept his word, and was singularly humble. It was a woman that induced him to be baptised. The day after the ceremony he begged "the loan of a dollar for the love of God" from the missionary; and being refused, straightway, and for the only time it was known of him, delivered a rumbling torrent of half-breed profanity, mixed with the unusual oaths of the barracks. Then he walked away with great humility. There was no swagger about Little Hammer. He was simply unquenchable and continuous. He sometimes got

drunk; but on such occasions he sat down, or lay down, in the most convenient place, and, like Cæsar beside Pompey's statue, wrapped his mantle about his face and forgot the world. He was a vagabond Indian, abandoned yet self-contained, outcast yet gregarious. No social ostracism unnerved him, no threats of the H. B. C. officials moved him; and when in the winter of 187— he was driven from one place to another, starving and homeless, and came at last emaciated and nearly dead to the Post at Yellow Quill, he asked for food and shelter as if it were his right, and not as a mendicant.

One night, shortly after his reception and restoration, he was sitting in the store silently smoking the Company's *tabac*. Sergeant Gellatly entered. Little Hammer rose, offered his hand, and muttered, "*How!*"

The Sergeant thrust his hand aside, and said sharply: "Whin I take y'r hand, Little Hammer, it'll be to put a grip an y'r wrists that'll stay there till y'are in quarters out of which y'll come nayther winter nor summer. Put that in y'r pipe and smoke it, y' scamp!"

Little Hammer had a bad time at the Post that night. Lounging half-breeds reviled him; the H. B. C. officials rebuked him; and travellers who were coming and going shared in the derision, as foolish people do where one is brow-beaten by many. At last a trapper entered, whom seeing, Little Hammer drew his blanket up about his head. The trapper sat down very near Little Hammer, and began to smoke. He laid his *plug-tabac* and his knife on the counter beside him. Little Hammer reached over and took the knife, putting it swiftly within his blanket. The trapper saw the act, and, turning sharply on the Indian, called him a thief. Little Hammer chuckled strangely and

said nothing; but his eyes peered sharply above the blanket. A laugh went round the store. In an instant the trapper, with a loud oath, caught at the Indian's throat; but as the blanket dropped back he gave a startled cry. There was the flash of a knife, and he fell back dead. Little Hammer stood above him, smiling, for a moment, and then, turning to Sergeant Gellatly, held out his arms silently for the handcuffs.

The next day two men were lost on the prairies. One was Sergeant Gellatly; the other was Little Hammer. The horses they rode travelled so close that the leg of the Indian crowded the leg of the white man; and the wilder the storm grew, the closer still they rode. A *poudre* day, with its steely air and fatal frost, was an ill thing in the world; but these entangling blasts, these wild curtains of snow, were desolating even unto death. The sun above was smothered; the earth beneath was trackless; the compass stood for loss all round.

What could Sergeant Gellatly expect, riding with a murderer on his left hand: a heathen that had sent a knife through the heart of one of the lords of the North? What should the gods do but frown, or the elements be at, but howling on their path? What should one hope for but that vengeance should be taken out of the hands of mortals, and be delivered to the angry spirits?

But if the gods were angry at the Indian, why should Sergeant Gellatly only sway to and fro, and now laugh recklessly, and now fall sleepily forward on the neck of his horse; while the Indian rode straight, and neither wavered nor wandered in mind, but at last slipped from his horse and walked beside the

other? It was at this moment that the soldier heard, "Sergeant Gellatly, Sergeant Gellatly," called through the blast; and he thought it came from the skies, or from some other world. "Me darlin'," he said, "have y' come to me?" But the voice called again: "Sergeant Gellatly, keep awake! keep awake! You sleep, you die; that's it. Holy. Yes. *How!*" Then he knew that it was Little Hammer calling in his ear, and shaking him; that the Indian was dragging him from his horse . . . his revolver, where was it? he had forgotten . . . he nodded . . . nodded. But Little Hammer said: "Walk, hell! you walk, yes;" and Little Hammer struck him again and again; but one arm of the Indian was under his shoulder and around him, and the voice was anxious and kind. Slowly it came to him that Little Hammer was keeping him alive against the will of the spirits—but why should they strike him instead of the Indian? Was there any sun in the world? Had there ever been? or fire or heat anywhere, or anything but wind and snow in all God's universe? . . . Yes, there were bells ringing—soft bells of a village church; and there was incense burning—most sweet it was! and the coals in the censer—how beautiful, how comforting! He laughed with joy again, and he forgot how cold, how maliciously cold, he had been; he forgot how dreadful that hour was before he became warm; when he was pierced by myriad needles through the body, and there was an incredible aching at his heart.

And yet something kept thundering on his body, and a harsh voice shrieked at him, and there were many lights dancing over his shut eyes; and then curtains of darkness were dropped, and centuries of oblivion came; and then—then his eyes opened to a comforting

silence, and some one was putting brandy between his teeth, and after a time he heard a voice say: "*Bien*, you see he was a murderer, but he save his captor. *Voilà*, such a heathen! But you will, all the same, bring him to justice—you call it that? But we shall see."

Then some one replied, and the words passed through an outer web of darkness and an inner haze of dreams. "The feet of Little Hammer were like wood on the floor when you brought the two in, Pretty Pierre—and lucky for them you found them. . . . The thing would read right in a book, but it's not according to the run of things up here, not by a damned sight!"

"Private Bradshaw," said the first voice again, "you do not know Little Hammer, nor that story of him. You wait for the trial. I have something to say. You think Little Hammer care for the prison, the rope?—Ah, when a man wait five years to kill—so! and it is done, he is glad sometimes when it is all over. Sergeant Gellatly there will wish he went to sleep forever in the snow, if Little Hammer come to the rope. Yes, I think."

And Sergeant Gellatly's brain was so numbed that he did not grasp the meaning of the words, though he said them over and over again. . . . Was he dead? No, for his body was beating, beating . . . well, it didn't matter . . . nothing mattered . . . he was sinking to forgetfulness . . . sinking.

So, for hours, for weeks—it might have been for years—and then he woke, clear and knowing, to "the unnatural, intolerable day"—it was that to him, with Little Hammer in prison. It was March when his memory and vigour vanished; it was May when he grasped the full remembrance of himself, and of that

fight for life on the prairie: of the hands that smote him that he should not sleep; of Little Hammer the slayer, who had driven death back discomfited, and brought his captor safe to where his own captivity and punishment awaited him.

When Sergeant Gellatly appeared in court at the trial he refused to bear witness against Little Hammer. "D' ye think—does wan av y' think—that I'll speak a word agin the man—haythen or no haythen—that pulled me out of me tomb and put me betune the barrack quilts? Here's the stripes aff me arm, and to gaol I'll go; but for what wint before I clapt the iron on his wrists, good or avil, divil a word will I say. An' here's me left hand, and there's me right fut, and an eye of me too, that I'd part with, for the cause of him that's done a trick that your honour wouldn't do —an' no shame to y' aither—an' y'd been where Little Hammer was with me."

His honour did not reply immediately, but he looked meditatively at Little Hammer before he said quietly, —"Perhaps not, perhaps not."

And Little Hammer, thinking he was expected to speak, drew his blanket up closely about him and grunted, "*How!*"

Pretty Pierre, the notorious half-breed, was then called. He kissed the Book, making the sign of the Cross swiftly as he did so, and unheeding the ironical, if hesitating, laughter in the court. Then he said: "*Bien*, I will tell you the story—the whole truth. I was in the Stony Plains. Little Hammer was 'good Injin' then. . . . Yes, *sacre!* it is a fool who smiles at that. I have kissed the Book. Dam! . . . He would be chief soon when old Two Tails die. He was proud, then, Little Hammer. He go not to the Post for drink;

he sell not next year's furs for this year's rations; he shoot straight."

Here Little Hammer stood up and said: "There is too much talk. Let me be. It is all done. The sun is set—I care not—I have killed him;" and then he drew his blanket about his face and sat down.

But Pierre continued: "Yes, you killed him—quick, after five years—that is so; but you will not speak to say why. Then, I will speak. The Injins say Little Hammer will be great man; he will bring the tribes together; and all the time Little Hammer was strong and silent and wise. Then Brigley the trapper—well, he was a thief and coward. He come to Little Hammer and say, 'I am hungry and tired.' Little Hammer give him food and sleep. He go away. *Bien*, he come back and say,—'It is far to go; I have no horse.' So Little Hammer give him a horse too. Then he come back once again in the night when Little Hammer was away, and before morning he go; but when Little Hammer return, there lay his bride—only an Injin girl, but his bride—dead! You see? Eh? No? Well, the Captain at the Post he says it was the same as Lucrece.—I say it was like hell. It is not much to kill or to die—that is in the game; but that other, *mon Dieu!* Little Hammer, you see how he hide his head: not because he kill the Tarquin, that Brigley, but because he is a poor *vaurien* now, and he once was happy and had a wife. . . . What would you do, judge honourable? . . . Little Hammer, I shake your hand—so—*How!*"

But Little Hammer made no reply.

The judge sentenced Little Hammer to one month in gaol. He might have made it one thousand months —it would have been the same; for when, on the last

morning of that month, they opened the door to set him free, he was gone. That is, the Little Hammer whom the high gods knew was gone; though an ill-nourished, self-strangled body was upright by the wall. The vagabond had paid his penalty, but desired no more of earth.

Upon the door was scratched the one word:

How!

SHE OF THE TRIPLE CHEVRON

SHE OF THE TRIPLE CHEVRON

BETWEEN Archangel's Rise and Pardon's Drive there was but one house. It was a tavern, and it was known as Galbraith's Place. There was no man in the Western Territories to whom it was not familiar. There was no traveller who crossed the lonely waste but was glad of it, and would go twenty miles out of his way to rest a night on a corn-husk bed which Jen Galbraith's hands had filled, to eat a meal that she had prepared, and to hear Peter Galbraith's tales of early days on the plains, when buffalo were like clouds on the horizon, when Indians were many and hostile, and when men called the great western prairie a wedge of the American desert.

It was night on the prairie. Jen Galbraith stood in the doorway of the tavern sitting-room and watched a mighty beacon of flame rising before her, a hundred yards away. Every night this beacon made a circle of light on the prairie, and Galbraith's Place was in the centre of the circle. Summer and winter it burned from dusk to daylight. No hand fed it but that of Nature. It never failed; it was a cruse that was never empty. Upon Jen Galbraith it had a weird influence. It grew to be to her a kind of spiritual companion, though, perhaps, she would not so have named it. This flaming gas, bubbling up from the depths of the earth on the lonely plains, was to her a mysterious presence grateful to her; the receiver of her thoughts, the daily necessity in her life. It filled her too with a

kind of awe; for, when it burned, she seemed not herself alone, but another self of her whom she could not quite understand. Yet she was no mere dreamer. Upon her practical strength of body and mind had come that rugged poetical sense, which touches all who live the life of mountain and prairie. She showed it in her speech; it had a measured cadence. She expressed it in her body; it had a free and rhythmic movement. And not Jen alone, but many another dweller on the prairie, looked upon it with a superstitious reverence akin to worship. A blizzard could not quench it. A gale of wind only fed its strength. A rain-storm made a mist about it, in which it was enshrined like a god.

Peter Galbraith could not fully understand his daughter's fascination for this Prairie Star, as the North-West people called it. It was not without its natural influence upon him; but he regarded it most as a comfortable advertisement, and he lamented every day that this never-failing gas well was not near a large population, and he still its owner. He was one of that large family in the earth who would turn the best things in their lives into merchandise. As it was, it brought much grist to his mill; for he was not averse to the exercise of the insinuating pleasures of euchre and poker in his tavern; and the hospitality which ranchmen, cowboys, and travellers sought at his hand was often prolonged, and also remunerative to him.

Pretty Pierre, who had his patrol as gamester defined, made semi-annual visits to Galbraith's Place. It occurred generally after the rounding-up and branding seasons, when the cowboys and ranchmen were "flush" with money. It was generally conceded that Monsieur Pierre would have made an early excursion

to a place where none is ever "ordered up," if he had not been free with the money which he so plentifully won.

Card-playing was to him a science and a passion. He loved to win for winning's sake. After that, money, as he himself put it, was only fit to be spent for the good of the country, and that men should earn more. Since he put his philosophy into instant and generous practice, active and deadly prejudice against him did not have lengthened life.

The Mounted Police, or as they are more poetically called, the Riders of the Plains, watched Galbraith's Place, not from any apprehension of violent events, but because Galbraith was suspected of infringing the prevailing law of Prohibition, and because for some years it had been a tradition and a custom to keep an eye on Pierre.

As Jen Galbraith stood in the doorway looking abstractedly at the beacon, her fingers smoothing her snowy apron the while, she was thinking thus to herself: "Perhaps father is right. If that Prairie Star were only at Vancouver or Winnipeg instead of here, our Val could be something more than a prairie-rider. He'd have been different, if father hadn't started this tavern business. Not that our Val is bad. He isn't; but if he had money he could buy a ranch,—or something."

Our Val, as Jen and her father called him, was a lad of twenty-two, one year younger than Jen. He was prairie-rider, cattle-dealer, scout, cowboy, happy-go-lucky vagrant,—a splendid Bohemian of the plains. As Jen said, he was not bad; but he had a fiery, wandering spirit, touched withal by the sunniest humour. He had never known any curb but Jen's love

and care. That had kept him within bounds so far. All men of the prairie spoke well of him. The great new lands have codes and standards of morals quite their own. One enthusiastic admirer of this youth said, in Jen's hearing, "He's a Christian—Val Galbraith!" That was the western way of announcing a man as having great civic and social virtues. Perhaps the respect for Val Galbraith was deepened by the fact that there was no broncho or cayuse that he could not tame to the saddle.

Jen turned her face from the flame and looked away from the oasis of warmth it made, to where the light shaded away into darkness, a darkness that was unbroken for many a score of miles to the north and west. She sighed deeply and drew herself up with an aggressive motion as though she was freeing herself of something. So she was. She was trying to shake off a feeling of oppression. Ten minutes ago the gas-lighted house behind her had seemed like a prison. She felt that she must have air, space, and freedom.

She would have liked a long ride on the buffalo-track. That, she felt, would clear her mind. She was no romantic creature out of her sphere, no exotic. She was country-born and bred, and her blood had been charged by a prairie instinct passing through three generations. She was part of this life. Her mind was free and strong, and her body was free and healthy. While that freedom and health was genial, it revolted against what was gross or irregular. She loved horses and dogs, she liked to take a gun and ride away to the Poplar Hills in search of game, she found pleasure in visiting the Indian Reservation, and talking to Sun-in-the-North, the only good Indian chief she knew, or that anyone else on the prairies

knew. She loved all that was strong and untamed, all that was panting with wild and glowing life. Splendidly developed, softly sinewy, warmly bountiful, yet without the least physical over-luxuriance or suggestiveness, Jen, with her tawny hair and dark-brown eyes, was a growth of unrestrained, unconventional, and eloquent life. Like Nature around her, glowing and fresh, yet glowing and hardy. There was, however, just a strain of pensiveness in her, partly owing to the fact that there were no women near her, that she had, virtually, lived her life as a woman alone.

II

As she thus looked into the undefined horizon two things were happening: a traveller was approaching Galbraith's Place from a point in that horizon; and in the house behind her someone was singing. The traveller sat erect upon his horse. He had not the free and lazy seat of the ordinary prairie-rider. It was a cavalry seat, and a military manner. He belonged to that handful of men who patrol a frontier of near a thousand miles, and are the security of peace in three hundred thousand miles of territory—the Riders of the Plains, the North-West Mounted Police.

This Rider of the Plains was Sergeant Thomas Gellatly, familiarly known as Sergeant Tom. Far away as he was he could see that a woman was standing in the tavern door. He guessed who it was, and his blood quickened at the guessing. But reining his horse on the furthest edge of the lighted circle, he said, debatingly: "I've little time enough to get to the Rise, and the order was to go through, hand the information to Inspector Jules, and be back within forty-eight

hours. Is it flesh and blood they think I am? Me that's just come back from a journey of a hundred miles, and sent off again like this with but a taste of sleep and little food, and Corporal Byng sittin' there at Fort Desire with a pipe in his mouth and the fat on his back like a porpoise. It's famished I am with hunger, and thirty miles yet to do; and *she* standin' there with a six months' welcome in her eye. . . . It's in the interest of Justice if I halt at Galbraith's Place for half-an-hour, bedad! The blackguard hid away there at Soldier's Knee will be arrested all the sooner; for horse and man will be able the better to travel. I'm glad it's not me that has to take him whoever he is. It's little I like leadin' a fellow-creature towards the gallows, or puttin' a bullet into him if he won't come. . . . Now what will we do, Larry, me boy?"—this to the broncho—"Go on without bite or sup, me achin' behind and empty before, and you laggin' in the legs, or stay here for the slice of an hour and get some heart into us? Stay here is it, me boy? then lave go me fut with your teeth and push on to the Prairie Star there." So saying, Sergeant Tom, whose language in soliloquy, or when excited, was more marked by a brogue than at other times, rode away towards Galbraith's Place.

In the tavern at that moment, Pretty Pierrre was sitting on the bar-counter, where temperance drinks were professedly sold, singing to himself. His dress was singularly neat, if coarse, and his slouch hat was worn with an air of jauntiness according well with his slight make and almost girlish delicacy of complexion. He was puffing a cigarette, in the breaks of the song. Peter Galbraith, tall, gaunt, and sombre-looking, sat with his chair tilted back against the

wall, rather nervously pulling at the strips of bark of which the yielding chair-seat was made. He may or may not have been listening to the song which had run through several verses. Where it had come from, no one knew; no one cared to know. The number of its verses were legion. Pierre had a sweet voice, of a peculiarly penetrating quality; still it was low and well-modulated, like the colour in his cheeks, which gave him his name.

These were the words he was singing as Sergeant Tom rode towards the tavern:

"The hot blood leaps in his quivering breast—
Voilà! 'Tis his enemies near!
There's a chasm deep on the mountain crest—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!
They follow him close and they follow him fast,
And he flies like a mountain deer;
Then a mad, wild leap and he's safe at last!—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!
A cry and a leap and the danger's past—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!"

At the close of the verse, Galbraith said: "I don't like that song. I—I don't like it. You're not a father, Pierre."

"No, I am not a father. I have some virtue of that. I have spared the world something, Pete Galbraith."

"You have the Devil's luck; your sins never get *you* into trouble."

A curious fire flashed in the half-breed's eyes, and he said, quietly: "Yes, I have great luck; but I have my little troubles at times—at times."

"They're different, though, from this trouble of Val's." There was something like a fog in the old man's throat.

"Yes, Val was quite foolish, you see. If he had killed a white man—Pretty Pierre, for instance—well, there would have been a show of arrest, but he could escape. It was an Injin. The Government cherish the Injin much in these days. The redskin must be protected. It must be shown that at Ottawa there is justice. That is droll—quite. Eh, *bien!* Val will not try to escape. He waits too long—near twenty-four hours. Then, it is as you see. . . . You have not told her?" He nodded towards the door of the sitting-room.

"Nothing. It'll come on Jen soon enough if he doesn't get away, and bad enough if he does, and can't come back to us. She's fond of him—as fond of him as a mother. Always was wiser than our Val or me, Jen was. More sense than a judge, and proud—but not too proud, Pierre—not too proud. She knows the right thing to do, like the Scriptures; and she does it too. . . . Where did you say he was hid?"

"In the Hollow at Soldier's Knee. He stayed too long at Moose Horn. Injins carried the news on to Fort Desire. When Val started south for the Border other Injins followed, and when a halt was made at Soldier's Knee they pushed across country over to Fort Desire. You see, Val's horse give out. I rode with him so far. My horse too was broke up. What was to be done? Well, I knew a ranchman not far from Soldier's Knee. I told Val to sleep, and I would go on and get the ranchman to send him a horse, while I come on to you. Then he could push on to the Border. I saw the ranchman, and he swore to send a horse to Val to-night. He will keep his word. He knows Val. That was at noon to-day, and I am here, you see, and you know all. The danger? Ah, my

friend,—the Police Barracks at Archangel's Rise! If word is sent down there from Fort Desire before Val passes, they will have out a big patrol, and his chances, —well, you know them, the Riders of the Plains. But Val, I think will have luck, and get into Montana before they can stop him. I hope; yes."

"If I could do anything, Pierre! Can't we—"

The half-breed interrupted: "No, we can't do anything, Galbraith. I have done all. The ranchman knows *me*. He will keep his word, by the Great Heaven!" It would seem as if Pierre had reasons for relying on the ranchman other than ordinary prairie courtesy to law-breakers.

"Pierre, tell me the whole story over, slow and plain. It don't seem nateral to think of it; but if you go over it again, perhaps I can get the thing more reas'nable in my mind. No, it ain't nateral to me, Pierre—our Val running away." The old man leaned forward and put his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands.

"Eh, well, it was an Injin. So much. It was in self-defence—a little, but of course to prove that. There is the difficulty. You see, they were all drinking, and the Injin—he was a chief—proposed—he proposed that Val should sell him his sister, Jen Galbraith, to be the chief's squaw. He would give him a cayuse. Val's blood came up quick—quite quick. You know Val. He said between his teeth: 'Look out, Snow Devil, you Injin dog, or I'll have your heart. Do you think a white girl is like a redskin woman, to be sold as you sell your wives and daughters to the squaw-men and white loafers, you reptile?' Then the Injin said an ugly word about Val's sister, and Val shot him dead like lightning. . . . Yes, that is good to swear, Galbraith. You are not the only one that

curses the law in this world. It is not Justice that fills the gaols, but Law."

The old man rose and walked up and down the room in a shuffling kind of way. His best days were done, the spring of his life was gone, and the step was that of a man who had little more of activity and force with which to turn the halting wheels of life. His face was not altogether good, yet it was not evil. There was a sinister droop to the eyelids, a suggestion of cruelty about the mouth; but there was more of good-nature and passive strength than either in the general expression. One could see that some genial influence had dominated what was inherently cruel and sinister in him. Still the sinister predisposition was there.

"He can't never come here, Pierre, can he?" he asked, despairingly.

"No, he can't come here, Galbraith. And look: if the Riders of the Plains should stop here to-night, or to-morrow, you will be cool—cool, eh?"

"Yes, I will be quite cool, Pierre." Then he seemed to think of something else and looked up half-curiously, half-inquiringly at the half-breed.

Pierre saw this. He whistled quietly to himself for a little, and then called the old man over to where he sat. Leaning slightly forward he made his reply to the look that had been bent upon him. He touched Galbraith's breast lightly with his delicate fingers, and said: "I have not much love for the world, Pete Galbraith, and not much love for men and women altogether; they are fools—nearly all. Some men—you know—treat me well. They drink with me—much. They would make life a hell for me if I was poor—shoot me, perhaps, quick!—if—if I didn't shoot first.

They would wipe me with their feet. They would *spoil* Pretty Pierre." This he said with a grim kind of humour and scorn, refined in its suppressed force. Fastidious as he was in appearance, Pierre was not vain. He had been created with a sense of refinement that reduced the grossness of his life; but he did not trade on it; he simply accepted it and lived it naturally after his kind. He was not good at heart, and he never pretended to be so. He continued: "No, I have not much love; but Val, well, I think of him some. His tongue is straight; he makes no lies. His heart is fire; his arms are strong; he has no fear. He does not love Pierre; but he does not pretend to love him. He does not think of me like the rest. So much the more when his trouble comes I help him. I help him to the death if he needs me. To make him my friend —that is good. Eh? Perhaps. You see, Galbraith?"

The old man nodded thoughtfully, and after a little pause said: "I have killed Injins myself;" and he made a motion of his head backward, suggestive of the past.

With a shrug of his shoulders the other replied: "Yes, so have I—sometimes. But the government was different then, and there were no Riders of the Plains." His white teeth showed menacingly under his slight moustache. Then there was another pause. Pierre was watching the other.

"What's that you're doing, Galbraith?"

"Rubbin' laudanum on my gums for this toothache. Have to use it for nuralgy, too."

Galbraith put the little vial back in his waistcoat pocket, and presently said: "What will you have to drink, Pretty Pierre?" That was his way of showing gratitude.

"I am reform. I will take coffee, if Jen Galbraith will make some. Too much broke glass inside is not good. Yes."

Galbraith went into the sitting-room to ask Jen to make the coffee. Pierre, still sitting on the bar-counter, sang to himself a verse of a rough-and-ready, satirical prairie ballad:

"The Riders of the Plains, my boys, are twenty thousand strong—
Oh, Lordy, don't they make the prairies howl!
'Tis their lot to smile on virtue and to collar what is wrong,
And to intercept the happy flowin' bowl.

They've a notion, that in glory, when we wicked ones have chains
They will all be major-generals—and that!
They're a lovely band of pilgrims are the Riders of the Plains—
Will some sinner please to pass around the hat?"

As he reached the last two lines of the verse the door opened and Sergeant Tom entered. Pretty Pierre did not stop singing. His eyes simply grew a little brighter, his cheek flushed ever so slightly, and there was an increase of vigour in the closing notes.

Sergeant Tom smiled a little grimly, then he nodded and said: "Been at it ever since, Pretty Pierre? You were singing the same song on the same spot when I passed here six months ago."

"Eh, Sergeant Tom, it is you? What brings you so far from your straw-bed at Fort Desire?" From underneath his hat-brim Pierre scanned the face of the trooper closely.

"Business. Not to smile on virtue, but to collar what is wrong. I guess you ought to be ready by

this time to go into quarters, Pierre. You've had a long innings."

"Not yet, Sergeant Tom, though I love the Irish, and your company would make me happy. But I am so innocent, and the world—it cannot spare me yet. But I think you come to smile on virtue, all the same, Sergeant Tom. She is beautiful is Jen Galbraith. Ah, that makes your eye bright—so! You Riders of the Plains, you do two things at one time. You make this hour someone happy, and that hour someone unhappy. In one hand the soft glove of kindness, in the other, *voilà!* the cold glove of steel. We cannot all be great like that, Sergeant Tom."

"Not great, but clever. *Voilà*, the Pretty Pierre! In one hand he holds the soft paper, the pictures that deceive—kings, queens, and knaves; in the other, pictures in gold and silver—money won from the pockets of fools. And so, as you say, *bien*, and we each have our way, bedad!"

Sergeant Tom noticed that the half-breed's eyes nearly closed, as if to hide the malevolence that was in them. He would not have been surprised to see a pistol drawn. But he was quite fearless, and if it was not his duty to provoke a difficulty, his fighting nature would not shrink from giving as good as he got. Besides, so far as that nature permitted, he hated Pretty Pierre. He knew the ruin that this gambler had caused here and there in the West, and he was glad that Fort Desire, at any rate, knew him less than it did formerly.

Just then Peter Galbraith entered with the coffee, followed by Jen. When the old man saw his visitor he stood still with sudden fear; but catching a warning look from the eye of the half-breed, he made an effort

to be steady, and said: "Well, Jen, if it isn't Sergeant Tom! And what brings you down here, Sergeant Tom? After some scalawag that's broke the law?"

Sergeant Tom had not noticed the blanched anxiety in the father's face; for his eyes were seeking those of the daughter. He answered the question as he advanced towards Jen: "Yes and no, Galbraith; I'm only takin' orders to those who will be after some scalawag by daylight in the mornin', or before. The hand of a traveller to you, Miss Jen."

Her eyes replied to his in one language; her lips spoke another. "And who is the law-breaker, Sergeant Tom?" she said, as she took his hand.

Galbraith's eyes strained towards the soldier till the reply came: "And I don't know that; not wan o' me. I'd ridden in to Fort Desire from another duty, a matter of a hundred miles, whin the major says to me, 'There's murder been done at Moose Horn. Take these orders down to Archangel's Rise, and deliver them and be back here within forty-eight hours.' And here I am on the way, and, if I wasn't ready to drop for want of a bite and sup, I'd be movin' away from here to the south at this moment."

Galbraith was trembling with excitement. Pierre warned him by a look, and almost immediately afterward gave him a reassuring nod, as if an important and favourable idea had occurred to him.

Jen, looking at the Sergeant's handsome face, said: "It's six months to a day since you were here, Sergeant Tom."

"What an almanac you are, Miss!"

Pretty Pierre sipping his coffee here interrupted musingly: "But her almanac is not always so reliable. So I think. When was I here last, Ma'm'selle?"

With something like menace in her eyes Jen replied: "You were here six months ago to-day, when you won thirty dollars from our Val; and then again, just thirty days after that."

"Ah, so! You remember with a difference."

A moment after, Sergeant Tom being occupied in talking to Jen, Pierre whispered to Peter Galbraith: "His horse—then the laudanum!"

Galbraith was puzzled for a moment, but soon nodded significantly, and the sinister droop to his eyes became more marked. He turned to the Sergeant and said, "Your horse must be fed as well as yourself, Sergeant Tom. I'll look after the beast, and Jen will take care of you. There's some fresh coffee, isn't there, Jen?"

Jen nodded an affirmative. Galbraith knew that the Sergeant would trust no one to feed his horse but himself, and the offer therefore was made with design.

Sergeant Tom replied instantly: "No, I'll do it if someone will show me the grass pile."

Pierre slipped quietly from the counter, and said, "I know the way, Galbraith. I will show."

Jen turned to the sitting-room, and Sergeant Tom moved to the tavern door, followed by Pierre, who, as he passed Galbraith, touched the old man's waistcoat pocket, and said: "Thirty drops in the coffee."

Then he passed out, singing softly:

"And he sleepeth so well, and he sleepeth so long—
The fight it was hard, my dear;
And his foes were many and swift and strong—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!"

There was danger ahead for Sergeant Thomas Gellatly. Galbraith followed his daughter to the sitting-room. She went to the kitchen and brought bread,

and cold venison, and prairie fowl, and stewed dried apples—the stay and luxury of all rural Canadian homes. The coffee-pot was then placed on the table. Then the old man said: "Better give him some of that old cheese, Jen, hadn't you? It's in the cellar." He wanted to be rid of her for a few moments.

"S'pose I had," and Jen vanished.

Now was Galbraith's chance. He took the vial of laudanum from his pocket, and opened the coffee-pot. It was half full. This would not suit. Someone else —Jen—might drink the coffee also! Yet it had to be done. Sergeant Tom should not go on. Inspector Jules and his Riders of the Plains must not be put upon the track of Val. Twelve hours would make all the difference. Pour out a cup of coffee?—Yes, of course, that would do. It was poured out quickly, and then thirty drops of laudanum were carefully counted into it. Hark, they are coming back!—Just in time. Sergeant Tom and Pierre enter from outside, and then Jen from the kitchen. Galbraith is pouring another cup of coffee as they enter, and he says: "Just to be sociable I'm goin' to have a cup of coffee with you, Sergeant Tom. How you Riders of the Plains get waited on hand and foot!" Did some warning flash through Sergeant Tom's mind or body, some mental shock or some physical chill? For he distinctly shivered, though he was not cold. He seemed suddenly oppressed with a sense of danger. But his eyes fell on Jen, and the hesitation, for which he did not then try to account, passed. Jen, clear-faced and true, invited him to sit and eat, and he, starting half-abstractedly, responded to her "Draw nigh, Sergeant Tom," and sat down. Commonplace as the words were, they thrilled him, for he thought of a table of his own in a

home of his own, and the same words spoken everyday, but without the "Sergeant,"—simply "Tom."

He ate heartily and sipped his coffee slowly, talking meanwhile to Jen and Galbraith. Pretty Pierre watched them all. Presently the gambler said: "Let us go and have our game of euchre, Galbraith. Ma'm'selle can well take care of Sergeant Tom."

Galbraith drank the rest of his coffee, rose, and passed with Pierre into the bar-room. Then the half-breed said to him, "You were careful—thirty drops?"

"Yes, thirty drops." The latent cruelty of the old man's nature was awake.

"That is right. It is sleep; not death. He will sleep so sound for half a day, perhaps eighteen hours, and then!—Val will have a long start."

In the sitting-room Sergeant Tom was saying: "Where is your brother, Miss Galbraith?" He had no idea that the order in his pocket was for the arrest of that brother. He merely asked the question to start the talk.

He and Jen had met but five or six times; but the impression left on the minds of both was pleasant—ineradicable. Yet, as Sergeant Tom often asked himself during the past six months, why should he think of her? The life he led was one of severe endurance, and harshness, and austerity. Into it there could not possibly enter anything of home. He was but a non-commissioned officer of the Mounted Police, and beyond that he had nothing. Ireland had not been kind to him. He had left her inhospitable shores, and after years of absence he had but a couple of hundred dollars laid up—enough to purchase his discharge and something over, but nothing with which to start a home. Ranching required capital. No, it couldn't be thought

of; and yet he had thought of it, try as he would not to do so. And she? There was that about this man who had lived life on two continents, in whose blood ran the warm and chivalrous Celtic fire, which appealed to her. His physical manhood was noble, if rugged; his disposition genial and free, if schooled, but not entirely, to that reserve which his occupation made necessary—a reserve he would have been more careful to maintain, in speaking of his mission a short time back in the bar-room, if Jen had not been there. She called out the frankest part of him; she opened the doors of his nature; she attracted confidence as the sun does the sunflower.

To his question she replied: "I do not know where our Val is. He went on a hunting expedition up north. We never can tell about him, when he will turn up or where he will be to-morrow. He may walk in any minute. We never feel uneasy. He always has such luck, and comes out safe and sound wherever he is. Father says Val's a hustler, and that nothing can keep in the road with him. But he's a little wild—a little. Still, we don't hector him, Sergeant Tom; hectoring never does any good, does it?"

"No, hectoring never does any good. And as for the wildness, if the heart of him's right, why that's easy out of him whin he's older. It's a fine lad I thought him, the time I saw him here. It's his freedom I wish I had—me that has to travel all day and part of the night, and thin part of the day and all night back again, and thin a day of sleep and the same thing over again. And that's the life of me, sayin' nothin' of the frost and the blizzards, and no home to go to, and no one to have a meal for me like this whin I turn up." And the sergeant wound up with, "Whooroo!

there's a speech for you, Miss!" and laughed good-humouredly. For all that, there was in his eyes an appeal that went straight to Jen's heart.

But, woman-like, she would not open the way for him to say anything more definite just yet. She turned the subject. And yet again, woman-like, she knew it would lead to the same conclusion:

"You must go to-night?"

"Yes, I must."

"Nothing—nothing would keep you?"

"Nothing. Duty is duty, much as I'd like to stay, and you givin' me the bid. But my orders were strict. You don't know what discipline means, perhaps. It means obeyin' commands if you die for it; and my commands were to take a letter to Inspector Jules at Archangel's Rise to-night. It's a matter of murder or the like, and duty must be done, and me that sleepy, not forgettin' your presence, as ever a man was and looked the world in the face."

He drank the rest of the coffee and mechanically set the cup down, his eyes closing heavily as he did so. He made an effort, however, and pulled himself together. His eyes opened, and he looked at Jen steadily for a moment. Then he leaned over and touched her hand gently with his fingers,—Pierre's glove of kindness,—and said: "It's in my heart to want to stay; but a sight of you I'll have on my way back. But I must go on now, though I'm that drowsy I could lie down here and never stir again."

Jen said to herself: "Poor fellow, poor fellow, how tired he is! I wish"— but she withdrew her hand.

He put his hand to his head, and said, absently: "It's my duty and it's orders, and . . . what was I sayin'? The disgrace of me if, if . . . bedad! the

sleep's on me; I'm awake, but I can't open my eyes. . . . If the orders of me—and a good meal . . . and the disgrace . . . to do me duty—looked the world in the face—"

During this speech he staggered to his feet, Jen watching him anxiously the while. No suspicion of the cause of his trouble crossed her mind. She set it down to extreme natural exhaustion. Presently feeling the sofa behind him, he dropped upon it, and, falling back, began to breathe heavily. But even in this physical stupefaction he made an effort to reassert himself, to draw himself back from the coming unconsciousness. His eyes opened, but they were blind with sleep; and as if in a dream, he said: "My duty . . . disgrace . . . a long sleep . . . Jen, dearest"—how she started then!—"it must be done . . . my Jen!" and he said no more.

But these few words had opened up a world for her—a new-created world on the instant. Her life was illuminated. She felt the fulness of a great thought suffusing her face. A beautiful dream was upon her. It had come to her out of his sleep. But with its splendid advent there came the other thing that always is born with woman's love—an almost pathetic care of the being loved. In the deep love of women the maternal and protective sense works in the parallels of mutual regard. In her life now it sprang full-statured in action; love of him, care of him; his honour her honour; his life her life. He must not sleep like this if it was his duty to go on. Yet how utterly worn he must be! She had seen men brought in from fighting prairie fires for three days without sleep; had watched them drop on their beds, and lie like logs for thirty-six hours. This sleep of her lover was, there-

fore, not so strange to her: but it was perilous to the performance of his duty.

"Poor Sergeant Tom," she said. "Poor Tom," she added; and then, with a great flutter at the heart at last, "My Tom!" Yes, she said that; but she said it to the beacon, to the Prairie Star, burning outside brighter, it seemed to her, than it had ever done before. Then she sat down and watched him for many minutes, thinking at the end of each that she would wake him. But the minutes passed, his breathing grew heavier, and he did not stir. The Prairie Star made quivering and luminous curtains of red for the windows, and Jen's mind was quivering in vivid waves of feeling just the same. It seemed to her as if she was looking at life now through an atmosphere charged with some rare, refining essence, and that in it she stood exultingly. Perhaps she did not define it so; but that which we define she felt. And happy are they who feel it, and, feeling it, do not lose it in this world, and have the hope of carrying it into the next.

After a time she rose, went over to him and touched his shoulder. It seemed strange to her to do this thing. She drew back timidly from the pleasant shock of a new experience. Then she remembered that he ought to be on his way, and she shook him gently, then, with all her strength, and called to him quietly all the time, as if her low tones ought to wake him, if nothing else could. But he lay in a deep and stolid slumber. It was no use. She went to her seat and sat down to think. As she did so, her father entered the room.

"Did you call, Jen?" he said; and turned to the sofa.

"I was calling to Sergeant Tom. He's asleep there; dead-gone, father. I can't wake him."

"Why should you wake him? He is tired."

The sinister lines in Galbraith's face had deepened greatly in the last hour. He went over and looked closely at the Sergeant, followed languidly by Pierre, who casually touched the pulse of the sleeping man, and said as casually:

"Eh, he sleep well; his pulse is like a baby; he was tired, much. He has had no sleep for one, two, three nights, perhaps; and a good meal, it makes him comfortable, and so you see!"

Then he touched lightly the triple chevron on Sergeant Tom's arm, and said:

"Eh, a man does much work for that. And then, to be moral and the friend of the law all the time!" Pierre here shrugged his shoulders. "It is easier to be wicked and free, and spend when one is rich, and starve when one is poor, than to be a sergeant and wear the triple chevron. But the sleep will do him good just the same, Jen Galbraith."

"He said that he must go to Archangel's Rise to-night, and be back at Fort Desire to-morrow night."

"Well, that's nothing to us, Jen," replied Galbraith, roughly. "He's got his own business to look after. He and his tribe are none too good to us and our tribe. He'd have your old father up to-morrow for selling a tired traveller a glass of brandy; and worse than that, ay, a great sight worse than that, mind you, Jen."

Jen did not notice, or, at least, did not heed, the excited emphasis on the last words. She thought that perhaps her father had been set against the Sergeant by Pierre.

"There, that'll do, father," she said. "It's easy to bark at a dead lion. Sergeant Tom's asleep, and you

say things that you wouldn't say if he was awake. He never did us any harm, and you know that's true, father."

Galbraith was about to reply with anger; but he changed his mind and walked into the bar-room, followed by Pierre.

In Jen's mind a scheme had been hurriedly and clearly formed; and with her, to form it was to put it into execution. She went to Sergeant Tom, opened his coat, felt in the inside pocket, and drew forth an official envelope. It was addressed to Inspector Jules at Archangel's Rise. She put it back and buttoned up the coat again. Then she said, with her hands firmly clenching at her side,—"I'll do it."

She went into the adjoining room and got a quilt, which she threw over him, and a pillow, which she put under his head. Then she took his cap and the cloak which he had thrown over a chair, as if to carry them away. But another thought occurred to her, for she looked towards the bar-room and put them down again. She glanced out of the window and saw that her father and Pierre had gone to lessen the volume of gas which was feeding the flame. This, she knew, meant that her father would go to bed when he came back to the house; and this suited her purpose. She waited till they had entered the bar-room again, and then she went to them, and said: "I guess he's asleep for all night. Best leave him where he is. I'm going. Good-night."

When she got back to the sitting-room she said to herself: "How old father's looking! He seems broken up to-day. He isn't what he used to be." She turned once more to look at Sergeant Tom, then she went to her room.

A little later Peter Galbraith and Pretty Pierre went to the sitting-room, and the old man drew from the Sergeant's pocket the envelope which Jen had seen. Pierre took it from him. "No, Pete Galbraith. Do not be a fool. Suppose you steal that paper. Sergeant Tom will miss it. He will understand. He will guess about the drug, then you will be in trouble. Val will be safe now. This Rider of the Plains will sleep long enough for that. There, I put the paper back. He sleeps like a log. No one can suspect the drug, and it is all as we like. No, we will not steal; that is wrong—quite wrong"—here Pretty Pierre showed his teeth. "We will go to bed. Come!"

Jen heard them ascend the stairs. She waited a half-hour, then she stole into Val's bedroom, and when she emerged again she had a bundle of clothes across her arm. A few minutes more and she walked into the sitting-room dressed in Val's clothes, and with her hair closely wound on the top of her head.

The house was still. The Prairie Star made the room light enough for her purpose. She took Sergeant Tom's cap and cloak and put them on. She drew the envelope from his pocket and put it in her bosom —she showed the woman there, though for the rest of this night she was to be a Rider of the Plains,—*She* of the Triple Chevron.

She went towards the door, hesitated, drew back, then paused, stooped down quickly, tenderly touched the soldier's brow with her lips, and said: "I'll do it for you. You shall not be disgraced—Tom."

III

This was at half-past ten o'clock. At two o'clock a jaded and blown horse stood before the door of the barracks at Archangel's Rise. Its rider, muffled to the chin, was knocking, and at the same time pulling his cap down closely over his head. "Thank God the night is dusky," he said. We have heard that voice before. The hat and cloak are those of Sergeant Tom, but the voice is that of Jen Galbraith. There is some danger in this act; danger for her lover, contempt for herself if she is discovered. Presently the door opens and a corporal appears. "Who's there? Oh," he added, as he caught sight of the familiar uniform; "where from?"

"From Fort Desire. Important orders to Inspector Jules. Require fresh horse to return with; must leave mine here. Have to go back at once."

"I say," said the corporal, taking the papers—"what's your name?"

"Gellatly—Sergeant Gellatly."

"Say, Sergeant Gellatly, this isn't accordin' to Hoyle—come in the night and go in the night and not stay long enough to have a swear at the Gover'ment. Why, you're comin' in, aren't you? You're comin' across the door-mat for a cup of coffee and a warm while the horse is gettin' ready, aren't you, Sergeant—Sergeant Gellatly, Sergeant Gellatly? I've heard of you, but—yes; I *will* hurry. Here, Waugh, this to Inspector Jules! If you won't step in and won't drink and will be unsociable, sergeant, why, come on and you shall have a horse as good as the one you've brought. I'm Corporal Galna."

Jen led the exhausted horse to the stables. Fortunately there was no lantern used, and therefore little chance for the garrulous corporal to study the face of his companion, even if he wished to do so. The risk was considerable; but Jen Galbraith was fired by that spirit of self-sacrifice which has held a world rocking to destruction on a balancing point of safety.

The horse was quickly saddled, Jen meanwhile remaining silent. While she was mounting, Corporal Galna drew and struck a match to light his pipe. He held it up for a moment as though to see the face of Sergeant Gellatly. Jen had just given a good-night, and the horse the word and a touch of the spur at the instant. Her face, that is, such of it as could be seen above the cloak and under the cap, was full in the light. Enough was seen, however, to call forth, in addition to Corporal Galna's good-night, the exclamation,—"Well, I'm blowed!"

As Jen vanished into the night a moment after, she heard a voice calling—not Corporal Galna's—"Sergeant Gellatly, Sergeant Gellatly!" She supposed it was Inspector Jules, but she would not turn back now. Her work was done.

A half-hour later Corporal Galna confided to Private Waugh that Sergeant Gellatly was too damned pretty for the force—wondered if they called him Beauty at Fort Desire—couldn't call him Pretty Gellatly, for there was Pretty Pierre who had right of possession to that title—would like to ask him what soap he used for his complexion—'twasn't this yellow bar-soap of the barracks, which wouldn't lather, he'd bet his ultimate dollar.

Waugh, who had sometime seen Sergeant Gellatly, entered into a disputation on the point. He said that

"Sergeant Tom was good-looking, a regular Irish thoroughbred; but he wasn't pretty, not much!—guessed Corporal Galna had nightmare, and finally, as the interest in the theme increased in fervour, announced that Sergeant Tom could loosen the teeth of, and knock the spots off, any man among the Riders, from Archangel's Rise to the Cypress Hills. Pretty—not much—thoroughbred all over!"

And Corporal Galna replied, sarcastically,—"That he might be able for spot dispersion of such a kind, but he had two as pretty spots on his cheek, and as white and touch-no-tobacco teeth as any female ever had." Private Waugh declared then that Corporal Galna would be saying Sergeant Gellatly wasn't a man at all, and wore earrings, and put his hair into papers; and when he could find no further enlargement of sarcasm, consigned the Corporal to a fiery place of future torment reserved for lunatics.

At this critical juncture Waugh was ordered to proceed to Inspector Jules. A few minutes after, he was riding away toward Soldier's Knee, with the Inspector and another private, to capture Val Galbraith, the slayer of Snow Devil, while four other troopers also started off in different directions.

IV

It was six o'clock when Jen drew rein in the yard at Galbraith's Place. Through the dank humours of the darkest time of the night she had watched the first grey streaks of dawn appear. She had caught her breath with fear at the thought that, by some accident, she might not get back before seven o'clock, the hour when her father rose. She trembled also at the

supposition of Sergeant Tom awaking and finding his papers gone. But her fearfulness and excitement was not that of weakness, rather that of a finely nervous nature, having strong elements of imagination, and, therefore, great capacities for suffering as for joy; but yet elastic, vigorous, and possessing unusual powers of endurance. Such natures rebuild as fast as they are exhausted. In the devitalising time preceding the dawn she had felt a sudden faintness come over her for a moment; but her will surmounted it, and, when she saw the ruddy streaks of pink and red glorify the horizon, she felt a sudden exaltation of physical strength. She was a child of the light, she loved the warm flame of the sun, the white gleam of the moon.

Holding in her horse to give him a five minutes' rest, she rose in her saddle and looked round. She was alone in her circle of vision, she and her horse. The long hillocks of prairie rolled away like the sea to the flushed morning, and the far-off Cypress Hills broke the monotonous skyline of the south. Already the air was dissipated of its choking weight, and the vast solitude was filling with that sense of freedom which night seems to shut in as with four walls, and day to widen gloriously. Tears sprang to her eyes from a sudden rush of feeling; but her lips were smiling. The world was so different from what it was yesterday. Something had quickened her into a glowing life.

Then she urged the horse on, and never halted till she reached home. She unsaddled the animal that had shared with her the hardship of the long, hard ride, hobbled it, and entered the house quickly. No one was stirring. Sergeant Tom was still asleep. This she saw, as she hurriedly passed in and laid the cap and cloak where she had found them. Then, once

again, she touched the brow of the sleeper with her lips, and went to her room to divest herself of Val's clothes. The thing had been done without anyone knowing of her absence. But she was frightened as she looked into the mirror. She was haggard, and her eyes were bloodshot. Eight hours or nearly in the saddle, at ten miles an hour, had told on her severely; as well it might. Even a prairie-born woman, however, understands the art and use of grooming better than a man. Warm water quickly heated at the gas, with a little acetic acid in it,—used generally for her scouring,—and then cold water with oatmeal flour, took away in part the dulness and the lines in the flesh. But the eyes! Jen remembered the vial of tincture of myrrh left by a young Englishman a year ago, and used by him for refreshing his eyes after a drinking bout. She got it, tried the tincture, and saw and felt an immediate benefit. Then she made a cup of strong green tea, and in ten minutes was like herself again.

Now for the horse. She went quickly out where she could not be seen from the windows of the house, and gave him a rubbing down till he was quite dry. Then she gave him a little water and some feed. The horse was really the touchstone of discovery. But Jen trusted in her star. If the worst came she would tell the tale. It must be told anyway to Sergeant Tom—but that was different now. Even if the thing became known it would only be a thing to be teased about by her father and others, and she could stop that. Poor girl, as though that was the worst that was to come from her act!

Sergeant Tom slept deeply and soundly. He had not stirred. His breathing was unnaturally heavy, Jen thought, but no suspicion of foul play came to

her mind yet. Why should it? She gave herself up to a sweet and simple sense of pride in the deed she had done for him, disturbed but slightly by the chances of discovery, and the remembrance of the match that showed her face at Archangel's Rise. Her hands touched the flaxen hair of the soldier, and her eyes grew luminous. One night had stirred all her soul to its depths. A new woman had been born in her. Val was dear to her—her brother Val; but she realised now that another had come who would occupy a place that neither father, nor brother, nor any other could fill. Yet it was a most weird set of tragic circumstances. This man before her had been set to do a task which might deprive her brother of his life, certainly of his freedom; that would disgrace him; her father had done a great wrong too, had put in danger the life of the man she loved, to save his son; she herself in doing this deed for her lover had placed her brother in jeopardy, had crossed swords with her father's purposes, had done the one thing that stood between that father's son and safety; Pretty Pierre, whom she hated and despised, and thought to be the enemy of her brother and of her home, had proved himself a friend; and behind it all was the brother's crime committed to avenge an insult to her name.

But such is life. Men and women are unwittingly their own executioners, and the executioners of those they love.

V

An hour passed, and then Galbraith and Pierre appeared. Jen noticed that her father went over to Sergeant Tom and rather anxiously felt his pulse. Once in the night the old man had come down and done the

same thing. Pierre said something in an undertone. Did they think he was ill? That was Jen's thought. She watched them closely; but the half-breed knew that she was watching, and the two said nothing more to each other. But Pierre said, in a careless way: "It is good he have that sleep. He was played out, quite."

Jen replied, a secret triumph at her heart: "But what about his orders, the papers he was to carry to Archangel's Rise? What about his being back at Fort Desire in the time given him?"

"It is not much matter about the papers. The poor devil that Inspector Jules would arrest—well, he will get off, perhaps, but that does no one harm. Eh, Galbraith? The law is sometimes unkind. And as for obeying orders, why, the prairie is wide, it is a hard ride, horses go wrong;—a little tale of trouble to Inspector Jules, another at Fort Desire, and who is to know except Pete Galbraith, Jen Galbraith, and Pierre? Poor Sergeant Tom. It was good he sleep so."

Jen felt there was irony behind the smooth words of the gambler. He had a habit of saying things, as they express it in that country, between his teeth. That signifies what is animal-like and cruel. Galbraith stood silent during Pierre's remarks, but, when he had finished, said:

"Yes, it's all right if he doesn't sleep too long; but there's the trouble—*too long!*"

Pierre frowned a warning, and then added, with unconcern: "I remember when you sleep thirty hours, Galbraith—after the prairie fire, three years ago, eh!"

"Well, that's so; that's so as you say it. We'll let him sleep till noon, or longer—or longer, won't we, Pierre?"

"Yes, till noon is good, or longer."

"But he shall not sleep longer if I can wake him," said Jen. "You do not think of the trouble all this sleeping may make for him."

"But then—but then, there is the trouble he will make for others, if he wakes. Think. A poor devil trying to escape the law!"

"But we have nothing to do with that, and justice is justice, Pierre."

"Eh, well, perhaps, perhaps!"

Galbraith was silent.

Jen felt that so far as Sergeant Tom's papers were concerned he was safe; but she felt also that by noon he ought to be on his way back to Fort Desire—after she had told him what she had done. She was anxious for his honour. That her lover shall appear well before the world, is a thing deep in the heart of every woman. It is a pride for which she will deny herself, even of the presence of that lover.

"Till noon," Jen said, "and then he must go."

VI

Jen watched to see if her father or Pierre would notice that the horse was changed, had been travelled during the night, or that it was a different one altogether. As the morning wore away she saw that they did not notice the fact. This ignorance was perhaps owing largely to the appearance of several ranchmen from near the American border. They spent their time in the bar-room, and when they left it was nearly noon. Still Sergeant Tom slept. Jen now went to him and tried to wake him. She lifted him to a sitting position, but his head fell on her shoulder. Disheartened, she

laid him down again. But now at last an undefined suspicion began to take possession of her. It made her uneasy; it filled her with a vague sense of alarm. Was this sleep natural? She remembered that, when her father and others had slept so long after the prairie fire, she had waked them once to give them drink and a little food, and they did not breathe so heavily as he was doing. Yet what could be done? What was the matter? There was not a doctor nearer than a hundred miles. She thought of bleeding,—the old-fashioned remedy still used on the prairies—but she decided to wait a little. Somehow she felt that she would receive no help from her father or Pierre. Had they anything to do with this sleep? Was it connected with the papers? No, not that, for they had not sought to take them, and had not made any remark about their being gone. This showed their unconcern on that point. She could not fathom the mystery, but the suspicion of something irregular deepened. Her father could have no reason for injuring Sergeant Tom; but Pretty Pierre—that was another matter. Yet she remembered too that her father had appeared the more anxious of the two about the Sergeant's sleep. She recalled that he said: "Yes, it's all right, if he doesn't sleep too long."

But Pierre could play a part, she knew, and could involve others in trouble, and escape himself. He was a man with a reputation for occasional wickednesses of a naked, decided type. She knew that he was possessed of a devil, of a very reserved devil, but liable to bold action on occasions. She knew that he valued the chances of life or death no more than he valued the thousand and one other chances of small importance, which occur in daily experience. It was his

creed that one doesn't go till the game is done and all the cards are played. He had a stoic indifference to events.

He might be capable of poisoning—*poisoning!* ah, that thought! of poisoning Sergeant Tom for some cause. But her father? The two seemed to act alike in the matter. Could her father approve of any harm happening to Tom? She thought of the meal he had eaten, of the coffee he had drunk. The coffee—was that the key? But she said to herself that she was foolish, that her love had made her so. No, it could not be.

But a fear grew upon her, strive as she would against it. She waited silently and watched, and twice or thrice made ineffectual efforts to rouse him. Her father came in once. He showed anxiety; that was unmistakable, but was it the anxiety of guilt of any kind? She said nothing. At five o'clock matters abruptly came to a climax. Jen was in the kitchen, but, hearing footsteps in the sitting-room, she opened the door quietly. Her father was bending over Sergeant Tom, and Pierre was speaking: "No, no, Galbraith, it is all right. You are a fool. It could not kill him."

"Kill him—*kill* him," she repeated gaspingly to herself.

"You see he was exhausted; he may sleep for hours yet. Yes, he is safe, I think."

"But Jen, she suspects something, she—"

"Hush!" said Pretty Pierre. He saw her standing near. She had glided forward and stood with flashing eyes turned, now upon the one, and now upon the other. Finally they rested on Galbraith.

"Tell me what you have done to him; what you

and Pretty Pierre have done to him. You have some secret. I will know." She leaned forward, something of the tigress in the poise of her body. "I tell you, I will know." Her voice was low, and vibrated with fierceness and determination. Her eyes glowed, and her nostrils trembled with disdain and indignation. As they drew back,—the old man sullenly, the gambler with a slight gesture of impatience,—she came a step nearer to them and waited, the cords of her shapely throat swelling with excitement. A moment so, and then she said in a tone that suggested menace, determination:

"You have poisoned him. Tell me the truth. Do you hear, father—the truth, or I will hate you. I will make you repent it till you die."

"But—" Pierre began.

She interrupted him. "Do not speak, Pretty Pierre. You are a devil. You will lie. Father—!" She waited.

"What difference does it make to you, Jen?"

"What difference—what difference to me? That you should be a murderer?"

"But that is not so, that is a dream of yours, Ma'm'selle," said Pierre.

She turned to her father again. "Father, will you tell the truth to me? I warn you it will be better for you both."

The old man's brow was sullen, and his lips were twitching nervously. "You care more for him than you do for your own flesh and blood, Jen. There's nothing to get mad about like that. I'll tell you when he's gone. . . . Let's—let's wake him," he added, nervously.

He stooped down and lifted the sleeping man to a sitting posture. Pierre assisted him.

Jen saw that the half-breed believed Sergeant Tom

could be wakened, and her fear diminished slightly, if her indignation did not. They lifted the soldier to his feet. Pierre pressed the point of a pin deep into his arm. Jen started forward, woman-like, to check the action, but drew back, for she saw heroic measures might be necessary to bring him to consciousness. But, nevertheless, her anger broke bounds, and she said: "Cowards—cowards! What spite made you do this?"

"Damnation, Jen," said the father, "you'll hector me till I make you sorry. What's this Irish policeman to you? What's he beside your own flesh and blood, I say again."

"Why does my own flesh and blood do such wicked tricks to an Irish soldier? Why does it give poison to an Irish soldier?"

"Poison, Jen? You needn't speak so ghost-like. It was only a dose of laudanum; not enough to kill him. Ask Pierre."

Inwardly she believed him, and said a Thank-God to herself, but to the half-breed she remarked: "Yes, ask Pierre—you are behind all this! It is some evil scheme of yours. Why did you do it? Tell the truth for once." Her eyes swam angrily with Pierre's.

Pierre was complacent; he admired her wild attacks. He smiled, and replied: "My dear, it was a whim of mine; but you need not tell *him*, all the same, when he wakes. You see this is your father's house, though the whim is mine. But look: he is waking—the pin is good. Some cold water, quick!"

The cold water was brought and dashed into the face of the soldier. He showed signs of returning consciousness. The effect of the laudanum had been intensified by the thoroughly exhausted condition of the body.

But the man was perfectly healthy, and this helped to resist the danger of a fatal result.

Pierre kept up an intermittent speech. "Yes, it was a mere whim of mine. Eh, he will think he has been an ass to sleep so long, and on duty, and orders to carry to Archangel's Rise!" Here he showed his teeth again, white and regular like a dog's. That was the impression they gave, his lips were so red, and the contrast was so great. One almost expected to find that the roof of his mouth was black, like that of a well-bred hound; but there is no evidence available on the point.

"There, that is good," he said. "Now set him down, Pete Galbraith. Yes—so, so! Sergeant Tom, ah, you will wake well, soon. Now the eyes a little wider. Good. Eh, Sergeant Tom, what is the matter? It is breakfast time—quite."

Sergeant Tom's eyes opened slowly and looked dazedly before him for a minute. Then they fell on Pierre. At first there was no recognition, then they became consciously clearer. "Pretty Pierre, you here in the barracks!" he said. He put his hand to his head, then rubbed his eyes roughly and looked up again. This time he saw Jen and her father. His bewilderment increased. Then he added: "What is the matter? Have I been asleep? What—!" He remembered. He staggered to his feet and felt his pockets quickly and anxiously for his letter. It was gone.

"The letter!" he said. "My orders! Who has robbed me? Faith, I remember. I could not keep awake after I drank the coffee. My papers are gone, I tell you, Galbraith," he said, fiercely.

Then he turned to Jen: "You are not in this, Jen. Tell me."

She was silent for a moment, then was about to

answer, when he turned to the gambler and said: "You are at the bottom of this. Give me my papers."

But Pierre and Galbraith were as dumbfounded as the Sergeant himself to know that the letter was gone. They were stunned beyond speech when Jen said, flushing: "No, Sergeant Tom, *I* am the thief. When I could not wake you, I took the letter from your pocket and carried it to Inspector Jules last night,—or, rather, Sergeant Gellatly carried them. I wore his cap and cloak and passed for him."

"You carried that letter to Inspector Jules last night, Jen?" said the soldier, all his heart in his voice.

Jen saw her father blanch, his mouth open blankly, and his lips refuse to utter the words on them. For the first time she comprehended some danger to him, to herself—to Val! "Father, father," she said,—"what is it?"

Pierre shrugged his shoulders and rejoined: "Eh, the devil! Such mistakes of women. They are fools—all."

The old man put out a shaking hand and caught his daughter's arm. His look was of mingled wonder and despair, as he said, in a gasping whisper, "You carried that letter to Archangel's Rise?"

"Yes," she answered, faltering now; "Sergeant Tom had said how important it was, you remember. That it was his duty to take it to Inspector Jules, and be back within forty-eight hours. He fell asleep. I could not wake him. I thought, what if he were my brother—our Val. So, when you and Pretty Pierre went to bed, I put on Val's clothes, took Sergeant Tom's cloak and hat, carried the orders to Jules, and was back here by six o'clock this morning."

Sergeant Tom's eyes told his tale of gratitude. He made a step towards her; but the old man, with a strange ferocity, motioned him back, saying,

"Go away from this house. Go quick. Go now, I tell you, or by God,—I'll—"

Here Pretty Pierre touched his arm.

Sergeant Tom drew back, not because he feared but as if to get a mental perspective of the situation.

Galbraith again said to his daughter,—"Jen, you carried them papers? You! for him—for the Law!" Then he turned from her, and with hand clenched and teeth set spoke to the soldier: "Haven't you heard enough? Curse you, why don't you go?"

Sergeant Tom replied coolly: "Not so fast, Galbraith. There's some mystery in all this. There's my sleep to be accounted for yet. You had some reason, some"—he caught the eyes of Pierre. He paused. A light began to dawn on his mind, and he looked at Jen, who stood rigidly pale, her eyes fixed fearfully, anxiously, upon him. She too was beginning to frame in her mind a possible horror; the thing that had so changed her father, the cause for drugging the soldier. There was a silence in which Pierre first, and then all, detected the sound of horses' hoofs. Pierre went to the door and looked out. He turned round again, and shrugged his shoulders with an expression of helplessness. But as he saw Jen was about to speak, and Sergeant Tom to move towards the door, he put up his hand to stay them both, and said: "A little—wait!"

Then all were silent. Jen's fingers nervously clasped and unclasped, and her eyes were strained towards the door. Sergeant Tom stood watching her pityingly; the old man's head was bowed. The sound of galloping grew plainer. It stopped. An instant and then three horsemen appeared before the door. One was Inspector Jules, one was Private Waugh, and the other between them was—let Jen tell who he was. With an agonised

cry she rushed from the house and threw herself against the saddle, and with her arms about the prisoner, cried:

"Oh, Val, Val, it was you! It was you they were after. It was you that—oh no, no, no! My poor Val, and I can't tell you—I can't tell you!"

Great as was her grief and self-reproach, she felt it would be cruel to tell him the part she had taken in placing him in this position. She hated herself, but why deepen his misery? His face was pale, but it had its old, open, fearless look, which dissipation had not greatly marred. His eyelids quivered, but he smiled, and touching her with his steel-bound hands, gently said:

"Never mind, Jen. It isn't so bad. You see it was this way: Snow Devil said something about someone that belonged to me, that cares more about me than I deserve. *Well, he died sudden, and I was there at the time.* That's all. I was trying with the help of Pretty Pierre to get out of the country"—and he waved his hand towards the half-breed.

"With Pretty Pierre—Pierre?" she said.

"Yes, he isn't *all* gambler. But they were too quick for me, and here I am. Jules is a hustler on the march. But he said he'd stop here and let me see you and dad as we go up to Fort Desire, and—there, don't mind, Sis—don't mind it so!"

Her sobs had ceased, but she clung to him as if she could never let him go. Her father stood near her, all the lines in his face deepened into bitterness. To him Val said: "Why, dad, what's the matter? Your hand is shaky. Don't you get this thing eatin' at your heart. It isn't worth it. That Injin would have *died* if you'd been in my place, I guess. Between you and me, I expect to give Jules the slip before we get there." And he

laughed at the Inspector, who laughed a little austerely too, and in his heart wished that it was anyone else he had as a prisoner than Val Galbraith, who was a favourite with the Riders of the Plains.

Sergeant Tom had been standing in the doorway regarding this scene, and working out in his mind the complications that had led to it. At this point he came forward, and Inspector Jules said to him, after a curt salutation:

"You were in a hurry last night, Sergeant Gellatly. You don't seem so pushed for time now. Usual thing. When a man seems over-zealous—drink, cards, or women behind it. But your taste is good, even if, under present circumstances"—He stopped, for he saw a threatening look in the eyes of the other, and that other said: "We won't discuss that matter, Inspector, if you please. I'm going on to Fort Desire now. I couldn't have seen you if I'd wanted to last night."

"That's nonsense. If you had waited one minute longer at the barracks you could have done so. I called to you as you were leaving, but you didn't turn back."

"No. I didn't hear you."

All were listening to this conversation, and none more curiously than Private Waugh. Many a time in days to come he pictured the scene for the benefit of his comrades. Pretty Pierre, leaning against the hitching-post near the bar-room, said languidly: "But, Inspector, he speaks the truth—quite: that is a virtue of the Riders of the Plains." Val had his eyes on the half-breed, and a look of understanding passed between them. While Val and his father and sister were saying their farewells in few words, but with homely demonstrations, Sergeant Tom brought his horse round and mounted it. Inspector Jules gave the word to move on. As they

started, Gellatly, who fell behind the others slightly, leaned down and whispered: "Forgive me, Jen. You did a noble act for me, and the life of me would prove to you that I'm grateful. It's sorry, sorry I am. But I'll do what I can for Val, as sure as the heart's in me. Good-bye, Jen."

She looked up with a faint hope in her eyes. "Good-bye!" she said. "I believe you . . . Good-bye!"

In a few minutes there was only a cloud of dust on the prairie to tell where the Law and its quarry were. And of those left behind, one was a broken-spirited old man with sorrow melting away the sinister look in his face; one, a girl hovering between the tempest of bitterness and a storm of self-reproach; and one a half-breed gambler, who again sat on the bar-counter smoking a cigarette and singing to himself, as indolently as if he were not in the presence of a painful drama of life, perhaps a tragedy. But was the song so pointless to the occasion, after all, and was the man so abstracted and indifferent as he seemed? For thus the song ran:

"Oh, the bird in a cage and the bird on a tree—
Voilà! 'tis a different fear!
The maiden weeps and she bends the knee—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!
But the bird in a cage has a friend in the tree,
And the maiden she dries her tear:
And the night is dark and no moon you see—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!
When the doors are open the bird is free—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!"

VII

These words kept ringing in Jen's ears as she stood again in the doorway that night with her face turned to the beacon. How different it seemed now! When she saw it last night it was a cheerful spirit of light—a something suggesting comfort, companionship, aspiration, a friend to the traveller, and a mysterious, but delightful, association. In the morning when she returned from that fortunate, yet most unfortunate, ride, it was still burning, but its warm flame was exhausted in the glow of the life-giving sun; the dream and delight of the night robbed of its glamour by the garish morning; like her own body, its task done, sinking before the unrelieved scrutiny of the day. To-night it burned with a different radiance. It came in fiery palpitations from the earth. It made a sound that was now like the moan of pine trees, now like the rumble of far-off artillery. The slight wind that blew spread the topmost crest of flame into strands of ruddy hair, and, looking at it, Jen saw herself rocked to and fro by tumultuous emotions, yet fuller of strength and larger of life than ever she had been. Her hot veins beat with determination, with a love which she drove back by another, cherished now more than it had ever been, because danger threatened the boy to whom she had been as a mother. In twenty-four hours she had grown to the full stature of love and suffering.

There were shadows that betrayed less roundness to her face; there were lines that told of weariness; but in her eyes there was a glowing light of hope. She raised her face to the stars and unconsciously paraphrasing Pierre's song said: "Oh, the God that dost save us, hear!"

A hand touched her arm, and a voice said, huskily, "Jen, I wanted to save him and—and not let you know of it; that's all. You're not keepin' a grudge agin me, my girl?"

She did not move nor turn her head. "I've no grudge, father; but—if—if you had told me, 'twouldn't be on my mind that I had made it worse for Val."

The kindness in the voice reassured him, and he ventured to say: "I didn't think you'd be carin' for one of the Riders of the Plains, Jen."

Then the old man trembled lest she should resent his words. She seemed about to do so, but the flush faded from her brow, and she said, simply: "I care for Val most, father. But *he* didn't know he was getting Val into trouble."

She suddenly quivered as a wave of emotion passed through her; and she said, with a sob in her voice: "Oh, it's all scrub country, father, and no paths, and—and I wish I had a mother!"

The old man sat down in the doorway and bowed his grey head in his arms. Then, after a moment, he whispered:

"She's been dead twenty-two years, Jen. The day Val was born she went away. I'd a-been a better man if she'd a-lived, Jen; and a better father."

This was an unusual demonstration between these two. She watched him sadly for a moment, and then, leaning over and touching him gently on the shoulder, said: "It's worse for you than it is for me, father. Don't feel so bad. Perhaps we shall save him yet."

He caught a gleam of hope in her words: "Mebbe, Jen, mebbe!" and he raised his face to the light.

This ritual of affection was crude and unadorned; but it was real. They sat there for half-an-hour, silent.

Then a figure came out of the shadows behind the house and stood before them. It was Pierre.

"I go to-morrow morning, Galbraith," he said.

The old man nodded, but did not reply.

"I go to Fort Desire," the gambler added.

Jen faced him. "What do you go there for, Pretty Pierre?"

"It is my whim. Besides, there is Val. He might want a horse some dark night."

"Pierre, do you mean that?"

"As much as Sergeant Tom means what he says. Every man has his friends. Pretty Pierre has a fancy for Val Galbraith—a little. It suits him to go to Fort Desire. Jen Galbraith, you make a grand ride last night. You do a bold thing—all for a man. We shall see what he will do for you. And if he does nothing—ah! you can trust the tongue of Pretty Pierre. He will wish he could die, instead of— Eh, *bien*, good-night!"

He moved away. Jen followed him. She held out her hand. It was the first time she had ever done so to this man.

"I believe you," she said. "I believe that you mean well to our Val. I am sorry that I called you a devil."

He smiled. "Ma'm'selle, that is nothing. You spoke true. But devils have their friends—and their whims. So you see, good-night."

"Mebbe it will come out all right, Jen—mebbe!" said the old man.

But Jen did not reply. She was thinking hard, her eyes upon the Prairie Star. Living life to the hilt greatly illumines the outlook of the mind. She was beginning to understand that evil is not absolute, and that good is often an occasion more than a condition.

There was a long silence again. At last the old man

rose to go and reduce the volume of flame for the night; but Jen stopped him. "No, father, let it burn all it can to-night. It's comforting."

"Mebbe so—mebbe!" he said.

A faint refrain came to them from within the house:

"When doors are open the bird is free—
Oh, the sweet Saint Gabrielle hear!"

VIII

It was a lovely morning. The prairie billowed away endlessly to the south, and heaved away in vastness to the north; and the fresh, sharp air sent the blood beating through the veins. In the bar-room some early traveller was talking to Peter Galbraith. A wandering band of Indians was camped about a mile away, the only sign of humanity in the waste. Jen sat in the doorway culling dried apples. Though tragedies occur in lives of the humble, they must still do the dull and ordinary task. They cannot stop to cherish morbidness, to feed upon their sorrow; they must care for themselves and labour for others. And well is it for them that it is so.

The Indian camp brings unpleasant memories to Jen's mind. She knows it belongs to old Sun-in-the-North, and that he will not come to see her now, nor could she, or would she, go to him. Between her and that race there can never again be kindly communion. And now she sees, for the first time, two horsemen riding slowly in the track from Fort Desire towards Galbraith's Place. She notices that one sits upright, and one seems leaning forward on his horse's neck. She shades her eyes with her hand, but she cannot dis-

tinguish who they are. But she has seen men tied to their horses ride as that man is riding, when stricken with fever, bruised by falling timber, lacerated by a grizzly, wounded by a bullet, or crushed by a herd of buffaloes. She remembered at that moment the time that a horse had struck Val with its forefeet, and torn the flesh from his chest, and how he had been brought home tied to a broncho's back.

The thought of this drove her into the house, to have Val's bed prepared for the sufferer, whoever he was. Almost unconsciously she put on the little table beside the bed a bunch of everlasting prairie flowers, and shaded the light to the point of quiet and comfort.

Then she went outside again. The travellers now were not far away. She recognised the upright rider. It was Pretty Pierre. The other—she could not tell. She called to her father. She had a fear which she did not care to face alone. "See, see, father," she said,—"Pretty Pierre and—and can it be Val?" For the moment she seemed unable to stir. But the old man shook his head, and said: "No, Jen, it can't be. It ain't Val."

Then another thought possessed her. Her lips trembled, and, throwing her head back as does a deer when it starts to shake off its pursuers by flight, she ran swiftly towards the riders. The traveller standing beside Galbraith said: "That man is hurt, wounded probably. I didn't expect to have a patient in the middle of the plains. I'm a doctor. Perhaps I can be of use here?"

When a hundred yards away Jen recognised the recumbent rider. A thousand thoughts flashed through her brain. What had happened? Why was he dressed in civilian's clothes? A moment, and she was at his horse's head. Another, and her warm hand clasped the pale, moist, and wrinkled one which hung by the horse's

neck. His coat at the shoulder was stained with blood, and there was a handkerchief about his head. This—this was Sergeant Tom Gellatly!

She looked up at Pierre, an agony of inquiry in her eyes, and pointing mutely to the wounded man. Pierre spoke with a tone of seriousness not common to his voice: "You see, Jen Galbraith, it was brave. Sergeant Tom one day resigns the Mounted Police. He leaves the Riders of the Plains. That is not easy to understand, for he is in much favour with the officers. But he buys himself out, and there is the end of the Sergeant and his triple chevron. That is one day. That night, two men on a ferry are crossing the Saskatchewan at Fort Desire. They are fired at from the shore behind. One man is hit twice. But they get across, cut the ferry loose, mount horses, and ride away together. The man that was hit—yes, Sergeant Tom. The other that was not hit was Val Galbraith."

Jen gave a cry of mingled joy and pain, and said, with Tom Gellatly's cold hand clasped to her bosom: "Val, our Val, is free, is safe."

"Yes, Val is free and safe—quite. The Riders of the Plains could not cross the river. It was too high. And so Tom Gellatly and Val got away. Val rides straight for the American border, and the other rides here."

They were now near the house, but Jen said, eagerly: "Go on. Tell me all."

"I knew what had happened soon, and I rode away, too, and last night I found Tom Gellatly lying beside his horse on the prairie. I have brought him here to you. You two are even now, Jen Galbraith."

They were at the tavern door. The traveller and Pierre lifted down the wounded and unconscious man, and brought him and laid him on Val Galbraith's bed.

The traveller examined the wounds in the shoulder and the head, and said: "The head is all right. If I can get the bullet out of the shoulder he'll be safe enough—in time."

The surgery was skilful but rude, for proper instruments were not at hand; and in a few hours he, whom we shall still call Sergeant Tom, lay quietly sleeping, the pallor gone from his face and the feeling of death from his hand.

It was near midnight when he waked. Jen was sitting beside him. He looked round and saw her. Her face was touched with the light that shone from the Prairie Star. "Jen," he said, and held out his hand.

She turned from the window and stood beside his bed. She took his outstretched hand. "You are better, Sergeant Tom?" she said, gently.

"Yes, I'm better; but it's not Sergeant Tom I am any longer, Jen."

"I forgot that."

"I owed you a great debt, Jen. I couldn't remain one of the Riders of the Plains and try to pay it. I left them. Then I tried to save Val, and I did. I knew how to do it without getting anyone else into trouble. It is well to know the trick of a lock and the hour that guard is changed. I had left, but I relieved guard that night just the same. It was a new man on watch. It's only a minute I had; for the regular relief watch was almost at my heels. I got Val out just in time. They discovered us, and we had a run for it. Pretty Pierre has told you. That's right. Val is safe now—"

In a low strained voice, interrupting him, she said, "Did Val leave you wounded so on the prairie?"

"Don't let that ate at your heart. No, he didn't.

I hurried him off, and he didn't know how bad I was hit. But I—I've paid my debt, haven't I, Jen?"

With eyes that could not see for tears, she touched pityingly, lovingly, the wounds on his head and shoulder, and said: "These pay a greater debt than you ever owed me. You risked your life for me—yes, for me. You have given up everything to do it. I can't pay you the great difference. No, never!"

"Yes—yes, you can, if you will, Jen. It's as aisy! If you'll say what I say, I'll give you quit of that difference, as you call it, forever and ever."

"First, tell me. Is Val quite, quite safe?"

"Yes, he's safe over the border by this time; and to tell you the truth, the Riders of the Plains wouldn't be dyin' to arrest him again if he was in Canada, which he isn't. It's little they wanted to fire at us, I know, when we were crossin' the river, but it had to be done, you see, and us within sight. Will you say what I ask you, Jen?"

She did not speak, but pressed his hand ever so slightly.

"Tom Gellatly, I promise," he said.

"Tom Gellatly, I promise—"

"To give you as much—"

"To give you as much—"

"Love—"

There was a pause, and then she falteringly said, "Love—"

"As you give to me—"

"As you give to me—"

"And I'll take you poor as you are—"

"And I'll take you poor as you are—"

"To be my husband as long as you live—"

"To be my husband as long as you live—"

"So help me, God."

"So help me, God."

She stooped with dropping tears, and he kissed her once. Then what was girl in her timidly drew back, while what was woman in her, and therefore maternal, yearned over the sufferer.

They had not seen the figure of an old man at the door. They did not hear him enter. They only knew of Peter Galbraith's presence when he said: "Mebbe—mebbe I might say Amen!"

THREE OUTLAWS

THREE OUTLAWS

The missionary at Fort Anne of the H. B. C. was violently in earnest. Before he piously followed the latest and most amply endowed batch of settlers, who had in turn preceded the new railway to the Fort, the word *scandal* had no place in the vocabulary of the citizens. The H. B. C. had never imported it into the Chinook language, the common meeting-ground of all the tribes of the North; and the British men and native-born, who made the Fort their home, or place of sojourn, had never found need for its use. Justice was so quickly distributed, men were so open in their conduct, good and bad, that none looked askance, nor put their actions in ambush, nor studied innuendo. But this was not according to the new dispensation—that is, the dispensation which shrewdly followed the settlers, who as shrewdly preceded the railway. And the dispensation and the missionary were known also as the Reverend Ezra Badgley, who, on his own declaration, in times past had "a call" to preach, and in the far East had served as local preacher, then probationer, then went on circuit, and now was missionary in a district of which the choice did credit to his astuteness, and gave room for his piety and for his holy rage against the Philistines. He loved a word for righteous mouthing, and in a moment of inspiration *pagan* and *scandal* came to him. Upon these two words he stamped, through them he perspired mightily, and with them he clenched his stubby fingers—such fingers as dug trenches, or snatched lewdly at soft flesh, in days of barbarian battle. To him all

men were Pagans who loved not the sound of his voice, nor wrestled with him in prayer before the Lord, nor fed him with rich food, nor gave him much strong green tea to drink. But these men were of opaque stuff, and were not dismayed, and they called him St. Anthony, and with a prophetic and deadly patience waited. The time came when the missionary shook his denouncing finger mostly at Pretty Pierre, who carefully nursed his silent wrath until the occasion should arrive for a delicate revenge which hath its hour with every man, if, hating, he knows how to bide the will of Fate.

The hour came. A girl had been found dying on the roadside beyond the Fort by the drunken doctor of the place and Pierre. Pierre was with her when she died.

"An' who's to bury her, the poor colleen?" said Shon McGann afterwards.

Pierre musingly replied: "She is a Protestant. There is but one man."

After many pertinent and vigorous remarks, Shon added, "A Pagan is it he calls you, Pierre, you that's had the holy water on y'r forehead, and the cross on the water, and that knows the book o' the Mass like the cards in a pack? Sinner y' are, and so are we all, God save us! say I; and weavin' the stripes for our backs He may be, and little I'd think of Him failin' in that: but Pagan—faith, it's black should be the white of the eyes of that preachin' sneak, and a rattle of teeth in his throat—divils go round me!"

The half-breed, still musing, replied: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—is that it, Shon?"

"Nivir a word truer by song or by book, and stand by the text, say I. For Papist I am, and Papist are you; and the imps from below in y'r fingers whin poker is the game; and outlaws as they call us both—you for

what it doesn't concern me, and I for a wild night in ould Donegal—but Pagan, wurra! whin shall it be, Pierre?"

"When shall it to be?"

"True for you. The teeth in his throat and a lump to his eye, and what more be the will o' God. Fightin' there'll be, av coorse; but by you I'll stand, and sorra inch will I give, if they'll do it with sticks or with guns, and not with the blisterin' tongue that's lied of me and me frinds—for frind I call you, Pierre, that loved me little in days gone by. And proud I am not of you, nor you of me; but we've tasted the bitter of avil days together, and divils surround me, if I don't go down with you or come up with you, whichever it be! For there's dirt, as I say on their tongues, and over their shoulder they look at you, and not with an eye full front."

Pierre was cool, even pensive. His lips parted slightly once or twice, and showed a row of white, malicious teeth. For the rest, he looked as if he were politely interested but not moved by the excitement of the other. He slowly rolled a cigarette and replied: "He says it is a scandal that I live at Fort Anne. Well, I was here before he came, and I shall be here after he goes—yes. A scandal—tsh! what is that? You know the word *Raca* of the Book? Well, there shall be more *Raca* soon —perhaps. No, there shall not be fighting as you think, Shon; but—" here Pierre rose, came over, and spread his fingers lightly on Shon's breast—"but this thing is between this man and me, Shon McGann, and you shall see a great matter. Perhaps there will be blood, perhaps not—perhaps only an end." And the half-breed looked up at the Irishman from under his dark brows so covertly and meaningly that Shon saw visions of a trouble as silent as a plague, as resistless as a great

flood. This noiseless vengeance was not after his own heart. He almost shivered as the delicate fingers drummed on his breast.

"Angels begird me, Pretty Pierre, but it's little I'd like you for enemy o' mine; for I know that you'd wait for y'r foe with death in y'r hand, and pity far from y'r heart; and y'd smile as you pulled the black-cap on y'r head, and laugh as you drew the life out of him, God knows how! Arrah, give me, sez I, the crack of a stick, the bite of a gun, or the clip of a sabre's edge, with a shout in y'r mouth the while!"

Though Pierre still listened lazily, there was a wicked fire in his eyes. His words now came from his teeth with cutting precision. "I have a great thought to-night, Shon McGann. I will tell you when we meet again. But, my friend, one must not be too rash—no, not too brutal. Even the sabre should fall at the right time, and then swift and still. Noise is not battle. Well, *au revoir!* To-morrow I shall tell you many things." He caught Shon's hand quickly, as quickly dropped it, and went out indolently singing a favourite song,—"*Voici le sabre de mon Père!*"

It was dark. Pretty Pierre stood still, and thought for a while. At last he spoke aloud: "Well, I shall do it, now I have him—so!" And he opened and shut his hand swiftly and firmly. He moved on, avoiding the more habited parts of the place, and by a roundabout came to a house standing very close to the bank of the river. He went softly to the door and listened. Light shone through the curtain of a window. He went to the window and looked beneath the curtain. Then he came back to the door, opened it very gently, stepped inside, and closed it behind him.

A man seated at a table, eating, rose; a man on whom

greed had set its mark—greed of the flesh, greed of men's praise, greed of money. His frame was thick-set, his body was heavily nourished, his eye was shifty but intelligent; and a close observer would have seen something elusive, something furtive and sinister, in his face. His lips were greasy with meat as he stood up, and a fear sprang to his face, so that its fat looked sickly. But he said hoarsely, and with an attempt at being brave—"How dare you enter my house without knocking? What do you want?"

The half-breed waved a hand protestingly towards him. "*Pardon!*" he said. "Be seated, and finish your meal. Do you know me?"

"Yes, I know you."

"Well, as I said, do not stop your meal. I have come to speak with you very quietly about a scandal—a scandal, you understand. This is Sunday night, a good time to talk of such things." Pierre seated himself at the table, opposite the man.

But the man replied: "I have nothing to say to you. You are—"

The half-breed interrupted: "Yes, I know, a Pagan fattening—" here he smiled, and looked at his thin hands—"'fattening for the shambles of the damned,' as you have said from the pulpit, Reverend Ezra Badgley. But you will permit me—a sinner as you say—to speak to you like this while you sit down and eat. I regret to disturb you, but you *will* sit, eh?"

Pierre's tone was smooth and low, almost deferential, and his eyes, wide open now, and hot with some hidden purpose, were fixed compellingly on the man. The missionary sat, and, having recovered slightly, fumbled with a knife and fork. A napkin was still beneath his greasy chin. He did not take it away.

Pierre then spoke slowly: "Yes, it is a scandal concerning a sinner—and a Pagan. . . . Will you permit me to light a cigarette? Thank you. . . . You have said many harsh things about me: well, as you see, I am amiable. I lived at Fort Anne before you came. They call me *Pretty* Pierre. Why is my cheek so? Because I drink no wine; I eat not much. *Pardon*, pork like that on your plate—no! no! I do not take green tea as there in your cup; I do not love women, one or many. Again, *pardon*, I say."

The other drew his brows together with an attempt at pious frowning and indignation; but there was a cold, sneering smile now turned upon him, and it changed the frown to anxiety, and made his lips twitch, and the food he had eaten grow heavy within him.

"I come to the scandal slowly. The woman? She was a young girl travelling from the far East, to search for a man who had—spoiled her. She was found by me and another. Ah, you start so! . . . Will you not listen? . . . Well, she died to-night."

Here the missionary gasped, and caught with both hands at the table.

"But before she died she gave two things into my hands: a packet of letters—a man is a fool to write such letters—and a small bottle of poison—laudanum, old-fashioned but sure. The letters were from the man at Fort Anne—*the man*, you hear! The other was for her death, if he would not take her to his arms again. Women are mad when they love. And so she came to Fort Anne, but not in time. The scandal is great, because the man is holy—sit down!"

The half-breed said the last two words sharply, but not loudly. They both sat down slowly again, looking each other in the eyes. Then Pierre drew from

his pocket a small bottle and a packet of letters, and held them before him. "I have this to say: there are citizens of Fort Anne who stand for justice more than law; who have no love for the ways of St. Anthony. There is a Pagan, too, an outlaw, who knows when it is time to give blow for blow with the holy man. Well, we understand each other, *hein?*"

The elusive, sinister look in the missionary's face was etched in strong lines now. A dogged sullenness hung about his lips. He noticed that one hand only of Pretty Pierre was occupied with the relics of the dead girl; the other was free to act suddenly on a hip pocket. "What do you want me to do?" he said, not whiningly, for beneath the selfish flesh and shallow outworks there were the elements of a warrior—all pulpy now, but they were there.

"This," was the reply: "for you to make one more outlaw at Fort Anne by drinking what is in this bottle —sit down, quick, by God!" He placed the bottle within reach of the other. "Then you shall have these letters; and there is the fire. After? Well, you will have a great sleep, the good people will find you, they will bury you, weeping much, and no one knows here but me. Refuse that, and there is the other, the Law—ah, the poor girl was so very young!—and the wild Justice which is sometimes quicker than Law. Well? well?"

The missionary sat as if paralysed, his face all grey, his eyes fixed on the half-breed. "Are you man or devil?" he groaned at length.

With a slight, fantastic gesture Pierre replied: "It was said that a devil entered into me at birth, but that was mere scandal—*peut-être.* You shall think as you will."

There was silence. The sullenness about the missionary's lips became charged with a contempt more

animal than human. The Reverend Ezra Badgley knew that the man before him was absolute in his determination, and that the Pagans of Fort Anne would show him little mercy, while his flock would leave him to his fate. He looked at the bottle. The silence grew, so that the ticking of the watch in the missionary's pocket could be heard plainly, having for its background of sound the continuous swish of the river. Pretty Pierre's eyes were never taken off the other, whose gaze, again, was fixed upon the bottle with a terrible fascination. An hour, two hours, passed. The fire burned lower. It was midnight; and now the watch no longer ticked; it had fulfilled its day's work. The missionary shuddered slightly at this. He looked up to see the resolute gloom of the half-breed's eyes, and that sneering smile, fixed upon him still. Then he turned once more to the bottle. . . . His heavy hand moved slowly towards it. His stubby fingers perspired and showed sickly in the light. . . . They closed about the bottle. Then suddenly he raised it, and drained it at a draught. He sighed once heavily and as if a great inward pain was over. Rising he took the letters silently pushed towards him, and dropped them into the fire. He went to the window, raised it, and threw the bottle into the river. The cork was left: Pierre pointed to it. He took it up with a strange smile and thrust it into the coals. Then he sat down by the table, leaning his arms upon it, his eyes staring painfully before him, and the forgotten napkin still about his neck. Soon the eyes closed, and, with a moan on his lips, his head dropped forward on his arms. . . . Pierre rose, and, looking at the figure soon to be breathless as the baked meats about it, said: "*Bien*, he was not all coward. No."

Then he turned and went out into the night.

SHON McGANN'S TOBOGAN RIDE

SHON McGANN'S TOBOGAN RIDE

"Oh, it's down the long side of Farcalladen Rise,
With the knees pressing hard to the saddle, my men;
With the sparks from the hoofs giving light to the eyes,
And our hearts beating hard as we rode to the glen!—

"And it's back with the ring of the chain and the spur,
And it's back with the sun on the hill and the moor,
And it's back is the thought sets my pulses astir!—
But I'll never go back to Farcalladen more."

Shon McGann was lying on a pile of buffalo robes in a mountain hut,—an Australian would call it a humpey,—singing thus to himself with his pipe between his teeth. In the room, besides Shon, were Pretty Pierre, Jo Gordineer, the Hon. Just Trafford, called by his companions simply "The Honourable," and Prince Levis, the owner of the establishment. Not that Monsieur Levis, the French Canadian, was really a Prince. The name was given to him with a humorous cynicism peculiar to the Rockies. We have little to do with Prince Levis here; but since he may appear elsewhere, this explanation is made.

Jo Gordineer had been telling The Honourable about the ghost of Guidon Mountain, and Pretty Pierre was collaborating with their host in the preparation of what, in the presence of the Law—that is of the North-West Mounted Police—was called ginger-tea, in consideration of the prohibition statute.

Shon McGann had been left to himself—an unusual thing; for everyone had a shot at Shon when oppor-

tunity occurred; and never a bull's-eye could they make on him. His wit was like the shield of a certain personage of mythology.

He had wandered on from verse to verse of the song with one eye on the collaborators and an ear open to The Honourable's polite exclamations of wonder. Jo had, however, come to the end of his weird tale—for weird it certainly was, told at the foot of Guidon Mountain itself, and in a region of vast solitudes—the pair of chemists were approaching "the supreme union of unctuous elements," as The Honourable put it, and in the silence that fell for a moment there crept the words of the singer:

"And it's down the long side of Farcalladen Rise,
And it's swift as an arrow and straight as a spear—"

Jo Gordineer interrupted. "Say, Shon, when'll you be through that tobogan ride of yours? Aint there any end to it?"

But Shon was looking with both eyes now at the collaborators, and he sang softly on:

"And it's keen as the frost when the summer-time dies,
That we rode to the glen and with never a fear."

Then he added: "The end's cut off, Joey, me boy; but what's a tobogan ride, annyway?"

"Listen to that, Pierre. I'll be eternally shivered if he knows what a tobogan ride is!"

"Hot shivers it'll be for you, Joey, me boy, and no quinine over the bar aither," said Shon.

"Tell him what a tobogan ride is, Pierre."

And Pretty Pierre said: "Eh, well, I will tell you.

It is like—no, you have the word precise, Joseph. Eh? What?"

Pierre then added something in French. Shon did not understand it, but he saw The Honourable smile, so with a gentle kind of contempt he went on singing:

"And it's hey for the hedge, and it's hey for the wall!
And it's over the stream with an echoing cry;
And there's three fled for ever from old Donegal,
And there's two that have shown how bold Irishmen die."

The Honourable then said, "What is that all about, Shon? I never heard the song before."

"No more you did. And I wish I could see the lad that wrote that song, livin' or dead. If one of ye's will tell me about your tobogan rides, I'll unfold about Farcalladen Rise."

Prince Levis passed the liquor. Pretty Pierre, seated on a candle-box, with a glass in his delicate fingers, said:

"Eh, well, the Honourable has much language. He can speak, precise—this would be better with a little lemon, just a little,—the Honourable, he, perhaps, will tell. Eh?"

Pretty Pierre was showing his white teeth. At this stage in his career, he did not love the Honourable. The Honourable understood that, but he made clear to Shon's mind what toboganing is.

And Shon, on his part, with fresh and hearty voice, touched here and there by a plaintive modulation, told about that ride on Farcalladen Rise; a tale of broken laws, and fight and fighting, and death and exile; and never a word of hatred in it all.

"And the writer of the song, who was he?" asked the Honourable.

"A gentleman after God's own heart. Heaven rest his soul, if he's dead, which I'm thinkin' is so, and give him the luck of the world if he's livin', say I. But it's little I know what's come to him. In the heart of Australia I saw him last; and mates we were together after gold. And little gold did we get but what was in the heart of him. And we parted one day, I carryin' the song that he wrote for me of Farcalladen Rise, and the memory of him; and him givin' me the word,—'I'll not forget you, Shon, me boy, whatever comes; remember that. And a short pull of the Three-Star together for the partin' salute,' says he. And the Three-Star in one sup each we took, as solemn as the Mass, and he went away towards Cloncurry and I to the coast; and that's the last that I saw of him, now three years gone. And here I am, and I wish I was with him wherever he is."

"What was his name?" said the Honourable.

"Lawless."

The fingers of the Honourable trembled on his cigar. "Very interesting, Shon," he said, as he rose, puffing hard till his face was in a cloud of smoke. "You had many adventures together, I suppose," he continued.

"Adventures we had and sufferin' bewhiles, and fun, too, to the neck and flowin' over."

"You'll spin us a long yarn about them another night, Shon?" said the Honourable.

"I'll do it now—a yarn as long as the lies of the Government; and proud of the chance."

"Not to-night, Shon" (there was a kind of huskiness in the voice of the Honourable); "it's time to turn in. We've a long tramp over the glacier to-morrow, and we must start at sunrise."

The Honourable was in command of the party,

though Jo Gordineer was the guide, and all were, for the moment, miners, making for the little Goshen Field over in Pipi Valley.—At least Pretty Pierre said he was a miner.

No one thought of disputing the authority of the Honourable, and they all rose.

In a few minutes there was silence in the hut, save for the oracular breathing of Prince Levis and the sparks from the fire. But the Honourable did not sleep well; he lay and watched the fire through most of the night.

The day was clear, glowing, decisive. Not a cloud in the curve of azure, not a shiver of wind down the cañon, not a frown in Nature, if we except the lowering shadows from the shoulders of the giants of the range. Crowning the shadows was a splendid helmet of light, rich with the dyes of the morning; the pines were touched with a brilliant if austere warmth. The pride of lofty lineage and severe isolation was regnant over all. And up through the splendour, and the shadows, and the loneliness, and the austere warmth, must our travellers go. Must go? Scarcely that, but the Honourable had made up his mind to cross the glacier and none sought to dissuade him from his choice; the more so, because there was something of danger in the business. Pretty Pierre had merely shrugged his shoulders at the suggestion, and had said:

"*Nom de Dieu*, the higher we go the faster we live, that is something."

"Sometimes we live ourselves to death too quickly. In my schooldays I watched a mouse in a jar of oxygen do that," said the Honourable.

"That is the best way to die," remarked the half-breed—"much."

Jo Gordineer had been over the path before. He was confident of the way, and proud of his office of guide.

"Climb Mont Blanc, if you will," said the Honourable, "but leave me these white bastions of the Selkirks."

Even so. They have not seen the snowy hills of God who have yet to look upon the Rocky Mountains, absolute, stupendous, sublimely grave.

Jo Gordineer and Pretty Pierre strode on together. They being well away from the other two, the Honourable turned and said to Shon: "What was the name of the man who wrote that song of yours, again, Shon?"

"Lawless."

"Yes, but his first name?"

"Duke—Duke Lawless."

There was a pause, in which the other seemed to be intently studying the glacier above them. Then he said: "What was he like?—in appearance, I mean."

"A trifle more than your six feet, about your colour of hair and eyes, and with a trick of smilin' that would melt the heart of an exciseman, and O'Connell's own at a joke, barrin' a time or two that he got hold of a pile of papers from the ould country. By the grave of St. Shon! thin he was as dry of fun as a piece of blotting-paper. And he said at last, before he was aisy and free again, 'Shon,' says he, 'it's better to burn your ships behind ye, isn't it?'

"And I, havin' thought of a glen in ould Ireland that I'll never see again, nor any that's in it, said: 'Not only burn them to the water's edge, Duke Lawless, but swear to your own soul that they never lived but in the dreams of the night.'

"'You're right there, Shon,' says he, and after that

no luck was bad enough to cloud the gay heart of him, and bad enough it was sometimes."

"And why do you fear that he is not alive?"

"Because I met an old mate of mine one day on the Frazer, and he said that Lawless had never come to Cloncurry; and a hard, hard road it was to travel."

Jo Gordineer was calling to them, and there the conversation ended. In a few minutes the four stood on the edge of the glacier. Each man had a long hickory stick which served as alpenstock, a bag hung at his side, and tied to his back was his gold-pan, the hollow side in, of course. Shon's was tied a little lower down than the others.

They passed up this solid river of ice, this giant power at endless strife with the high hills, up towards its head. The Honourable was the first to reach the point of vantage, and to look down upon the vast and wandering fissures, the frigid bulwarks, the great fortresses of ice, the ceaseless snows, the aisles of this mountain sanctuary through which Nature's splendid anthems rolled. Shon was a short distance below, with his hand over his eyes, sweeping the semi-circle of glory.

Suddenly there was a sharp cry from Pierre: "*Mon Dieu!* Look!"

Shon McGann had fallen on a smooth pavement of ice. The gold-pan was beneath him, and down the glacier he was whirled—whirled, for Shon had thrust his heels in the snow and ice, and the gold-pan performed a series of circles as it sped down the incline. His fingers clutched the ice and snow, but they only left a red mark of blood behind. Must he go the whole course of that frozen slide, plump into the wild depths below?

"*Mon Dieu!—mon Dieu!*" said Pretty Pierre, piteously. The face of the Honourable was set and tense.

Jo Gordineer's hand clutched his throat as if he choked. Still Shon sped. It was a matter of seconds only. The tragedy crowded to the awful end.

But, no.

There was a tilt in the glacier, and the gold-pan, suddenly swirling, again swung to the outer edge, and shot over.

As if hurled from a catapult, the Irishman was ejected from the white monster's back. He fell on a wide shelf of ice, covered with light snow, through which he was tunnelled, and dropped on another ledge below, near the path by which he and his companions had ascended.

"Shied from the finish, by God!" said Jo Gordineer.

"*Le pauvre* Shon!" added Pretty Pierre.

The Honourable was making his way down, his brain haunted by the words, "He'll never go back to Farcalladen more."

But Jo was right.

For Shon McGann was alive. He lay breathless, helpless, for a moment; then he sat up and scanned his lacerated fingers: he looked up the path by which he had come; he looked down the path he seemed destined to go; he started to scratch his head, but paused in the act, by reason of his fingers.

Then he said: "It's my mother wouldn't know me from a can of cold meat if I hadn't stopped at this station; but wurrawurra, what a car it was to come in!" He examined his tattered clothes and bare elbows; then he unbuckled the gold-pan, and no easy task was it with his ragged fingers. "'Twas not for deep minin' I brought ye," he said to the pan, "nor for scrapin' the clothes from me back."

Just then the Honourable came up. "Shon, my man . . . alive, thank God! How is it with you?"

"I'm hardly worth the lookin' at. I wouldn't turn my back to ye for a ransom."

"It's enough that you're here at all."

"Ah, *voilà!* this Irishman!" said Pretty Pierre, as his light fingers touched Shon's bruised arm gently.

This from Pretty Pierre!

There was that in the voice which went to Shon's heart. Who could have guessed that this outlaw of the North would ever show a sign of sympathy or friendship for anybody? But it goes to prove that you can never be exact in your estimate of character. Jo Gordineer only said jestingly: "Say, now, what are you doing, Shon, bringing us down here, when we might be well into the Valley by this time?"

"That in your face and the hair aff your head," said Shon; "it's little you know a tobogan ride when you see one. I'll take my share of the grog, by the same token."

The Honourable uncorked his flask. Shon threw back his head with a laugh.

> "For it's rest when the gallop is over, me men!
> And it's here's to the lads that have ridden their last;
> And it's here's—"

But Shon had fainted with the flask in his hand and this snatch of a song on his lips.

They reached shelter that night. Had it not been for the accident, they would have got to their destination in the Valley; but here they were twelve miles from it. Whether this was fortunate or unfortunate may be seen later. Comfortably bestowed in this mountain tavern, after they had toasted and eaten their venison and lit their pipes, they drew about the fire.

Besides the four, there was a figure that lay sleeping in a corner on a pile of pine branches, wrapped in a bear-skin robe. Whoever it was slept soundly.

"And what was it like—the gold-pan flyer—the tobogan ride, Shon?" remarked Jo Gordineer.

"What was it like?—what was it like?" replied Shon. "Sure, I couldn't see what it was like for the stars that were hittin' me in the eyes. There wasn't any world at all. I was ridin' on a streak of lightnin', and nivir a rubber for the wheels; and my fingers makin' stripes of blood on the snow; and now the stars that were hittin' me were white, and thin they were red, and sometimes blue—"

"The Stars and Stripes," inconsiderately remarked Jo Gordineer.

"And there wasn't any beginning to things, nor any end of them; and whin I struck the snow and cut down the core of it like a cat through a glass, I was willin' to say with the Prophet of Ireland—"

"Are you going to pass the liniment, Pretty Pierre?"

It was Jo Gordineer said that.

What the Prophet of Israel did say—Israel and Ireland were identical to Shon—was never told.

Shon's bubbling sarcasm was full-stopped by the beneficent savour that, rising now from the hands of the four, silenced all irrelevant speech. It was a function of importance. It was not simply necessary to say *How !* or *Here's reformation !* or *I look towards you !* As if by a common instinct, the Honourable, Jo Gordineer, and Pretty Pierre, turned towards Shon and lifted their glasses. Jo Gordineer was going to say: "Here's a safe foot in the stirrups to you," but he changed his mind and drank in silence.

Shon's eye had been blazing with fun, but it took on,

all at once, a misty twinkle. None of them had quite bargained for this. The feeling had come like a wave of soft lightning, and had passed through them. Did it come from the Irishman himself? Was it his own nature acting through those who called him "partner"?

Pretty Pierre got up and kicked savagely at the wood in the big fireplace. He ostentatiously and needlessly put another log of Norfolk-pine upon the fire.

The Honourable gaily suggested a song.

"Sing us '*Avec les Braves Sauvages*,' Pierre," said Jo Gordineer.

But Pierre waved his fingers towards Shon: "Shon, his song—he did not finish—on the glacier. It is good we hear all. *Hein?*"

And so Shon sang:

"Oh it's down the long side of Farcalladen Rise."

The sleeper on the pine branches stirred nervously, as if the song were coming through a dream to him. At the third verse he started up, and an eager, sun-burned face peered from the half-darkness at the singer. The Honourable was sitting in the shadow, with his back to the new actor in the scene.

"For it's rest when the gallop is over, my men!
And it's here's to the lads that have ridden their last!
And it's here's—"

Shon paused. One of those strange lapses of memory came to him which come at times to most of us concerning familiar things. He could get no further than he did on the mountain side. He passed his hand over his forehead, stupidly:—"Saints forgive me; but it's gone from me, and sorra the one can I get it; me that had it

by heart, and the lad that wrote it far away. Death in the world, but I'll try it again!

"For it's rest when the gallop is over, my men!
And it's here's to the lads that have ridden their last!
And it's here's—"

Again he paused.

But from the half-darkness there came a voice, a clear baritone:

"And here's to the lasses we leave in the glen,
With a smile for the future, a sigh for the past."

At the last words the figure strode down into the firelight.

"Shon, old friend, don't you know me?"

Shon had started to his feet at the first note of the voice, and stood as if spellbound.

There was no shaking of hands. Both men held each other hard by the shoulders, and stood so for a moment looking steadily eye to eye.

Then Shon said: "Duke Lawless, there's parallels of latitude and parallels of longitude, but who knows the tomb of ould Brian Borhoime?"

Which was his way of saying, "How come you here?"

Duke Lawless turned to the others before he replied. His eyes fell on the Honourable. With a start and a step backward, and with a peculiar angry dryness in his voice, he said:

"Just Trafford!"

"Yes," replied the Honourable, smiling, "I have found you."

"Found me! And why have you sought me? Me, Duke Lawless? I should have thought—"

The Honourable interrupted: "To tell you that you are *Sir* Duke Lawless."

"That? You sought me to tell me *that?*"

"I did."

"You are sure? And for naught else?"

"As I live, Duke."

The eyes fixed on the Honourable were searching. Sir Duke hesitated, then held out his hand. In a swift but cordial silence it was taken. Nothing more could be said then. It is only in plays where gentlemen freely discuss family affairs before a curious public. Pretty Pierre was busy with a decoction. Jo Gordineer was his associate. Shon had drawn back, and was apparently examining the indentations on his gold-pan.

"Shon, old fellow, come here," said Sir Duke Lawless.

But Shon had received a shock. "It's little I knew *Sir* Duke Lawless—" he said.

"It's little you needed to know then, or need to know now, Shon, my friend. I'm Duke Lawless to you here and henceforth, as ever I was then, on the wallaby track."

And Shon believed him.

The glasses were ready.

"I'll give the toast," said the Honourable with a gentle gravity. "To Shon McGann and his Tobogan Ride!"

"I'll drink to the first half of it with all my heart," said Sir Duke. "It's all I know about."

"Amen to that divorce," rejoined Shon.

"But were it not for the Tobogan Ride we shouldn't have stopped here," said the Honourable; "and where would this meeting have been?"

"That alters the case," Sir Duke remarked.

"I take back the 'Amen,'" said Shon.

II

Whatever claims Shon had upon the companionship of Sir Duke Lawless, he knew there were other claims that were more pressing. After the toast was finished, with an emphasised assumption of weariness, and a hint of a long yarn on the morrow, he picked up his blanket and started for the room where all were to sleep. The real reason of this early departure was clear to Pretty Pierre at once, and in due time it dawned upon Jo Gordineer.

The two Englishmen, left alone, sat for a few moments silent and smoking hard. Then the Honourable rose, got his knapsack, and took out a small number of papers, which he handed to Sir Duke, saying, "By slow postal service to Sir Duke Lawless. Residence, somewhere on one of five continents."

An envelope bearing a woman's writing was the first thing that met Sir Duke's eye. He stared, took it out, turned it over, looked curiously at the Honourable for a moment, and then began to break the seal.

"Wait, Duke. Do not read that. We have something to say to each other first."

Sir Duke laid the letter down. "You have some explanation to make," he said.

"It was so long ago; mightn't it be better to go over the story again?"

"Perhaps."

"Then it is best you should tell it. I am on my defence, you know."

Sir Duke leaned back, and a frown gathered on his forehead. Strikingly out of place on his fresh face it seemed. Looking quickly from the fire to the face of

the Honourable and back again earnestly, as if the full force of what was required came to him, he said: "We shall get the perspective better if we put the tale in the third person. Duke Lawless was the heir to the title and estates of Trafford Court. Next in succession to him was Just Trafford, his cousin. Lawless had an income sufficient for a man of moderate tastes. Trafford had not quite that, but he had his profession of the law. At college they had been fast friends, but afterwards had drifted apart, through no cause save difference of pursuits and circumstances. Friends they still were and likely to be so always. One summer, when on a visit to his uncle, Admiral Sir Clavel Lawless, at Trafford Court, where a party of people had been invited for a month, Duke Lawless fell in love with Miss Emily Dorset. She did him the honour to prefer him to any other man—at least, he thought so. Her income, however, was limited like his own. The engagement was not announced, for Lawless wished to make a home before he took a wife. He inclined to ranching in Canada, or a planter's life in Queensland. The eight or ten thousand pounds necessary was not, however, easy to get for the start, and he hadn't the least notion of discounting the future, by asking the admiral's help. Besides, he knew his uncle did not wish him to marry unless he married a woman *plus* a fortune. While things were in this uncertain state, Just Trafford arrived on a visit to Trafford Court. The meeting of the old friends was cordial. Immediately on Trafford's arrival, however, the current of events changed. Things occurred which brought disaster. It was noticeable that Miss Emily Dorset began to see a deal more of Admiral Lawless and Just Trafford, and a deal less of the younger Lawless. One day Duke Lawless came back to the house unexpectedly,

his horse having knocked up on the road. On entering the library he saw what turned the course of his life."

Sir Duke here paused, sighed, shook the ashes out of his pipe with a grave and expressive anxiety which did not properly belong to the action, and remained for a moment, both arms on his knees, silent, and looking at the fire. Then he continued:

"Just Trafford sat beside Emily Dorset in an attitude of—say, affectionate consideration. She had been weeping, and her whole manner suggested very touching confidences. They both rose on the entrance of Lawless; but neither tried to say a word. What could they say? Lawless apologised, took a book from the table which he had not come for, and left."

Again Sir Duke paused.

"The book was an illustrated *Much Ado About Nothing*," said the Honourable.

"A few hours after, Lawless had an interview with Emily Dorset. He demanded, with a good deal of feeling, perhaps,—for he was romantic enough to love the girl,—an explanation. He would have asked it of Trafford first if he had seen him. She said Lawless should trust her; that she had no explanation at that moment to give. If he waited—but Lawless asked her if she cared for him at all, if she wished or intended to marry him? She replied lightly, 'Perhaps, when you become Sir Duke Lawless.' Then Lawless accused her of heartlessness, and of encouraging both his uncle and Just Trafford. She amusingly said, 'Perhaps she had, but it really didn't matter, did it?' For reply, Lawless said her interest in the whole family seemed active and impartial. He bade her not vex herself at all about him, and not to wait until he became Sir Duke Lawless, but to give preference to seniority and begin with the title

at once; which he has reason since to believe that she did. What he said to her he has been sorry for, not because he thinks it was undeserved, but because he has never been able since to rouse himself to anger on the subject, nor to hate the girl and Just Trafford as he ought. Of the dead he is silent altogether. He never sought an explanation from Just Trafford, for he left that night for London, and in two days was on his way to Australia. The day he left, however, he received a note from his banker saying that £8000 had been placed to his credit by Admiral Lawless. Feeling the indignity of what he believed was the cause of the gift, Lawless neither acknowledged it nor used it, not any penny of it. Five years have gone since then, and Lawless has wandered over two continents, a self-created exile. He has learned much that he didn't learn at Oxford; and not the least of all, that the world is not so bad as is claimed for it, that it isn't worth while hating and cherishing hate, that evil is half-accidental, half-natural, and that hard work in the face of nature is the thing to pull a man together and strengthen him for his place in the universe. Having burned his ships behind him, that is the way Lawless feels. And the story is told."

Just Trafford sat looking musingly but imperturbably at Sir Duke for a minute; then he said:

"That is your interpretation of the story, but not *the* story. Let us turn the medal over now. And, first, let Trafford say that he has the permission of Emily Dorset—"

Sir Duke interrupted: "Of her who was Emily Dorset."

"Of *Miss* Emily Dorset, to tell what she did not tell that day five years ago. After this other reading of the tale has been rendered, her letter and those documents

are there for fuller testimony. Just Trafford's part in the drama begins, of course, with the library scene. Now Duke Lawless had never known Trafford's half-brother, Hall Vincent. Hall was born in India, and had lived there most of his life. He was in the Indian Police, and had married a clever, beautiful, but impossible kind of girl, against the wishes of her parents. The marriage was not a very happy one. This was partly owing to the quick Lawless and Trafford blood, partly to the wife's wilfulness. Hall thought that things might go better if he came to England to live. On their way from Madras to Colombo he had some words with his wife one day about the way she arranged her hair, but nothing serious. This was shortly after tiffin. That evening they entered the harbour at Colombo; and Hall going to his cabin to seek his wife, could not find her; but in her stead was her hair, arranged carefully in flowing waves on the pillow, where through the voyage her head had lain. That she had cut it off and laid it there was plain; but she could not be found, nor was she ever found. The large porthole was open; this was the only clue. But we need not go further into that. Hall Vincent came home to England. He told his brother the story as it has been told to you, and then left for South America, a broken-spirited man. The wife's family came on to England also. They did not meet Hall Vincent; but one day Just Trafford met at a country seat in Devon, for the first time, the wife's sister. She had not known of the relationship between Hall Vincent and the Traffords; and on a memorable afternoon he told her the full story of the married life and the final disaster, as Hall had told it to him."

Sir Duke sprang to his feet.

"You mean, Just, that—"

"I mean that Emily Dorset was the sister of Hall Vincent's wife."

Sir Duke's brown fingers clasped and unclasped nervously. He was about to speak, but the Honourable said: "That is only half the story—wait.

"Emily Dorset would have told Lawless all in due time, but women don't like to be bullied ever so little, and that, and the unhappiness of the thing, kept her silent in her short interview with Lawless. She could not have guessed that Lawless would go as he did. Now, the secret of her diplomacy with the uncle—diplomacy is the best word to use—was Duke Lawless's advancement. She knew how he had set his heart on the ranching or planting life. She would have married him without a penny, but she felt his pride in that particular, and respected it. So, like a clever girl, she determined to make the old chap give Lawless a cheque on his possible future. Perhaps, as things progressed, the same old chap got an absurd notion in his head about marrying her to Just Trafford, but that was meanwhile all the better for Lawless. The very day that Emily Dorset and Just Trafford succeeded in melting Admiral Lawless's heart to the tune of eight thousand, was the day that Duke Lawless doubted his friend and challenged the loyalty of the girl he loved."

Sir Duke's eyes filled. "Great Heaven! Just—" he said.

"Be quiet for a little. You see she had taken Trafford into her scheme against his will, for he was never good at mysteries and theatricals, and he saw the danger. But the cause was a good one, and he joined the sweet conspiracy, with what result these five years bear witness. Admiral Lawless has been dead a year and a half, his wife a year. For he married out of anger with Duke

Lawless; but he did not marry Emily Dorset, nor did he beget a child."

"In Australia I saw a paragraph speaking of a visit made by him and Lady Lawless to a hospital, and I thought—"

"You thought he had married Emily Dorset. and—well, you had better read that letter now."

Sir Duke's face was flushing with remorse and pain. He drew his hand quickly across his eyes. "And you've given up London, your profession, everything, just to hunt for me, to tell me this—you who would have profited by my eternal absence! What a beast and ass I've been!"

"Not at all; only a bit poetical and hasty, which is not unnatural in the Lawless blood. I should have been wild myself, maybe, if I had been in your position; only I shouldn't have left England, and I should have taken the papers regularly and have asked the other fellow to explain. The other fellow didn't like the little conspiracy. Women, however, seem to find that kind of thing a moral necessity. By the way, I wish when you go back you'd send me out my hunting traps. I've made up my mind to—oh, quite so—read the letter—I forgot!"

Sir Duke opened the letter and read it, putting it away from him now and then as if it hurt him, and taking it up a moment after to continue the reading. The Honourable watched him.

At last Sir Duke rose.

"Just—"

"Yes? Go on."

"Do you think she would have me now?"

"Don't know. Your outfit is not so beautiful as it used to be."

"Don't chaff me."

"Don't be so funereal, then."

Under the Honourable's matter of fact air Sir Duke's face began to clear. "Tell me, do you think she still cares for me?"

"Well, I don't know. She's rich now—got the grandmother's stocking. Then there's Pedley, of the Scots Guards; he has been doing loyal service for a couple of years. What does the letter say?"

"It only tells the truth, as you have told it to me, but from her standpoint; not a word that says anything but beautiful reproach and general kindness. That is all."

"Quite so. You see it was all four years ago, and Pedley—"

But the Honourable paused. He had punished his friend enough. He stepped forward and laid his hand on Sir Duke's shoulder. "Duke, you want to pick up the threads where they were dropped. You dropped them. Ask me nothing about the ends that Emily Dorset held. I conspire no more. But go you and learn your fate. If one remembers, why should the other forget?"

Sir Duke's light heart and eager faith came back with a rush. "I'll start for England at once. I'll know the worst or the best of it before three months are out."

The Honourable's slow placidity turned.

"Three months.—Yes, you may do it in that time. Better go from Victoria to San Francisco and then overland. You'll not forget about my hunting traps, and—oh, certainly, Gordineer; come in."

"Say," said Gordineer. "I don't want to disturb the meeting, but Shon's in chancery somehow; breathing like a white pine, and thrashing about! He's red-hot with fever."

Before he had time to say more, Sir Duke seized the candle and entered the room. Shon was moving uneasily and suppressing the groans that shook him.

"Shon, old friend, what is it?"

"It's the pain here, Lawless," laying his hand on his chest.

After a moment Sir Duke said, "Pneumonia!"

From that instant thoughts of himself were sunk in the care and thought of the man who in the heart of Queensland had been mate and friend and brother to him. He did not start for England the next day, nor for many a day.

Pretty Pierre and Jo Gordineer and his party carried Sir Duke's letters over into the Pipi Valley, from where they could be sent on to the coast. Pierre came back in a few days to see how Shon was, and expressed his determination of staying to help Sir Duke, if need be.

Shon hovered between life and death. It was not alone the pneumonia that racked his system so; there was also the shock he had received in his flight down the glacier. In his delirium he seemed to be always with Lawless:

"'For it's down the long side of Farcalladen Rise' —It's share and share even, Lawless, and ye'll ate the rest of it, or I'll lave ye—Did ye say ye'd found water —Lawless—water!—Sure you're drinkin' none yourself—I'll sing it again for you then—'And it's back with the ring of the chain and the spur'—'But burn all your ships behind you'—'I'll never go back to Farcalladen more!'"

Sir Duke's fingers had a trick of kindness, a suggestion of comfort, a sense of healing, that made his simple remedies do more than natural duty. He was doctor, nurse,—sleepless nurse,—and careful apothecary. And

when at last the danger was past and he could relax watching, he would not go, and he did not go, till they could all travel to the Pipi Valley.

In the blue shadows of the firs they stand as we take our leave of one of them. The Honourable and Sir Duke have had their last words, and Sir Duke has said he will remember about the hunting traps. They understand each other. There is sunshine in the face of all—a kind of Indian summer sunshine, infused with the sadness of a coming winter; and theirs is the winter of parting. Yet it is all done quietly.

"We'll meet again, Shon," said Sir Duke, "and you'll remember your promise to write to me."

"I'll keep my promise, and I hope the news that'll please you best is what you'll send us first from England. And if you should go to ould Donegal—I've no words for me thoughts at all!"

"I know them. Don't try to say them. We've not had the luck together, all kinds and all weathers, for nothing."

Sir Duke's eyes smiled a good-bye into the smiling eyes of Shon. They were much alike, these two, whose stations were so far apart. Yet somewhere, in generations gone, their ancestors may have toiled, feasted, or governed, in the same social hemisphere; and here in the mountains life was levelled to one degree again.

Sir Duke looked round. The pines were crowding up elate and warm towards the peaks of the white silence. The river was brawling over a broken pathway of boulders at their feet; round the edge of a mighty mountain crept a mule train; a far-off glacier glistened harshly in the lucid morning, yet not harshly either, but with the rugged form of a vast antiquity, from which these scarred and grimly austere hills had grown. Here

Nature was filled with a sense of triumphant mastery—the mastery of ageless experience. And down the great piles there blew a wind of stirring life, of the composure of great strength, and touched the four, and the man that mounted now was turned to go. A quick good-bye from him to all; a God-speed-you from the Honourable; a wave of the hand between the rider and Shon, and Sir Duke Lawless was gone.

"You had better cook the last of that bear this morning, Pierre," said the Honourable. And their life went on.

. . . . . .

It was eight months after that, sitting in their hut after a day's successful mining, the Honourable handed Shon a newspaper to read. A paragraph was marked. It concerned the marriage of Miss Emily Dorset and Sir Duke Lawless.

And while Shon read, the Honourable called into the tent:—"Have you any lemons for the whisky, Pierre?"

A satisfactory reply being returned, the Honourable proceeded: "We'll begin with the bottle of Pommery, which I've been saving months for this."

The royal-flush toast of the evening belonged to Shon.

"God bless him! To the day when we see him again!"

And all of them saw that day.

PÈRE CHAMPAGNE

"Is it that we stand at the top of the hill and the end of the travel has come, Pierre? Why don't you spake?"

"We stand at the top of the hill, and it is the end."

"And Lonely Valley is at our feet and Whiteface Mountain beyond?"

"One at our feet, and the other beyond, Shon McGann."

"It's the sight of my eyes I wish I had in the light of the sun this mornin'. Tell me, what is't you see?"

"I see the trees on the foot-hills, and all the branches shine with frost. There is a path—so wide!—between two groves of pines. On Whiteface Mountain lies a glacier-field . . . and all is still." . . .

"The voice of you is far-away-like, Pierre—it shivers as a hawk cries. It's the wind, the wind, maybe."

"There's not a breath of life from hill or valley."

"But I feel it in my face."

"It is not the breath of life you feel."

"Did you not hear voices coming athwart the wind? . . . Can you see the people at the mines?"

"I have told you what I see."

"You told me of the pine-trees, and the glacier, and the snow—"

"And that is all."

"But in the Valley, in the Valley, where all the miners are?"

"I cannot see them."

"For love of heaven, don't tell me that the dark is fallin' on your eyes too."

"No, Shon, I am not growing blind."

"Will you not tell me what gives the ache to your words?"

"I see in the Valley—snow . . . snow."

"It's a laugh you have at me in your cheek, whin I'd give years of my ill-spent life to watch the chimney smoke come curlin' up slow through the sharp air in the Valley there below."

"There is no chimney and there is no smoke in all the Valley."

"Before God, if you're a man, you'll put your hand on my arm and tell me what trouble quakes your speech."

"Shon McGann, it is for you to make the sign of the Cross . . . there, while I put my hand on your shoulder —so!"

"Your hand is heavy, Pierre."

"This is the sight of the eyes that see. In the Valley there is snow; in the snow of all that was, there is one poppet-head of the mine that was called St. Gabriel . . . upon the poppet-head there is the figure of a woman."

"Ah!"

"She does not move—"

"She will never move?"

"She will never move."

"The breath o' my body hurts me. . . . There is death in the Valley, Pierre?"

"There is death."

"It was an avalanche—that path between the pines?"

"And a great storm after."

"Blessed be God that I cannot behold that thing this day! . . . And the woman, Pierre, the woman aloft?"

"She went to watch for someone coming, and as she watched, the avalanche came—and she moves not."

"Do we know that woman?"

"Who can tell?"

"What was it you whispered soft to yourself, then, Pierre?"

"I whispered no word."

"There, don't you hear it, soft and sighin'? . . . *Nathalie!*"

"*Mon Dieu!* It is not of the world."

"It's facin' the poppet-head where she stands I'd be."

"Your face is turned towards her."

"Where is the sun?"

"The sun stands still above her head."

"With the bitter over, and the avil past, come rest for her and all that lie there."

"Eh, *bien*, the game is done!"

"If we stay here we shall die also."

"If we go we die, perhaps." . . .

"Don't spake it. We will go, and we will return when the breath of summer comes from the South."

"It shall be so."

"Hush! Did you not hear—?"

"I did not hear. I only see an eagle, and it flies towards Whiteface Mountain."

And Shon McGann and Pretty Pierre turned back from the end of their quest—from a mighty grave behind to a lonely waste before; and though one was snow-blind, and the other knew that on him fell the chiefer weight of a great misfortune, for he must provide food and fire and be as a mother to his comrade—they had courage; without which, men are as the standing straw in an unreaped field in winter; but having

become like the hooded pine, that keepeth green in frost, and hath the bounding blood in all its icy branches.

And whence they came and wherefore was as thus:—

A French Canadian once lived in Lonely Valley. One day great fortune came to him, because it was given him to discover the mine St. Gabriel. And he said to the woman who loved him, "I will go with mules and much gold, that I have hewn and washed and gathered, to a village in the East where my father and my mother are. They are poor, but I will make them rich; and then I will return to Lonely Valley, and a priest shall come with me, and we will dwell here at Whiteface Mountain, where men are men and not children." And the woman blessed him, and prayed for him, and let him go.

He travelled far through passes of the mountains, and came at last where new cities lay upon the plains, and where men were full of evil and of lust of gold. And he was free of hand and light of heart; and at a place called Diamond City false friends came about him, and gave him champagne wine to drink, and struck him down and robbed him, leaving him for dead.

And he was found, and his wounds were all healed: all save one, and that was in the brain. Men called him mad.

He wandered through the land, preaching to men to drink no wine, and to shun the sight of gold. And they laughed at him, and called him Père Champagne.

But one day much gold was found at a place called Reef o' Angel; and jointly with the gold came a plague which scars the face and rots the body; and Indians died by hundreds and white men by scores; and Père Champagne, of all who were not stricken down, feared nothing, and did not flee, but went among the sick and

dying, and did those deeds which gold cannot buy, and prayed those prayers which were never sold. And who can count how high the prayers of the feckless go!

When none was found to bury the dead, he gave them place himself beneath the prairie earth,—consecrated only by the tears of a fool,—and for extreme unction he had but this: "*God be merciful to me, a sinner!*"

Now it happily chanced that Pierre and Shon McGann, who travelled westward, came upon this desperate battle-field, and saw how Père Champagne dared the elements of scourge and death; and they paused and laboured with him—to save where saving was granted of Heaven, and to bury when the Reaper reaped and would not stay his hand. At last the plague ceased, because winter stretched its wings out swiftly o'er the plains from frigid ranges in the West. And then Père Champagne fell ill again.

And this last great sickness cured his madness: and he remembered whence he had come, and what befell him at Diamond City so many moons ago. And he prayed them, when he knew his time was come, that they would go to Lonely Valley and tell his story to the woman whom he loved; and say that he was going to a strange but pleasant Land, and that there he would await her coming. He begged them that they would go at once, that she might know, and not strain her eyes to blindness, and be sick at heart because he came not. And he told them her name, and drew the coverlet up about his head and seemed to sleep; but he waked between the day and dark, and gently cried: "The snow is heavy on the mountain . . . and the Valley is below . . . *Gardez, mon Père!* . . . Ah, Nathalie!" And they buried him between the dark and dawn.

Though winds were fierce, and travel full of peril,

they kept their word, and passed along wide steppes of snow, until they entered passes of the mountains, and again into the plains; and at last one *poudre* day, when frost was shaking like shreds of faintest silver through the air, Shon McGann's sight fled. But he would not turn back—a promise to a dying man was sacred, and he could follow if he could not lead; and there was still some pemmican, and there were martens in the woods, and wandering deer that good spirits hunted into the way of the needy; and Pierre's finger along the gun was sure.

Pierre did not tell Shon that for many days they travelled woods where no sunshine entered; where no trail had ever been, nor foot of man had trod: that they had lost their way. Nor did he make his comrade know that one night he sat and played a game of *solitaire* to see if they would ever reach the place called Lonely Valley. Before the cards were dealt, he made a sign upon his breast and forehead. Three times he played, and three times he counted victory; and before three suns had come and gone, they climbed a hill that perched over Lonely Valley. And of what they saw and their hearts felt we know.

And when they turned their faces eastward they were as men who go to meet a final and a conquering enemy; but they had kept their honour with the man upon whose grave-tree Shon McGann had carved beneath his name these words:

"A Brother of Aaron."

Upon a lonely trail they wandered, the spirits of lost travellers hungering in their wake—spirits that mumbled in cedar thickets, and whimpered down the flumes of snow. And Pierre, who knew that evil things are

exorcised by mighty conjuring, sang loudly, from a throat made thin by forced fasting, a song with which his mother sought to drive away the devils of dreams that flaunted on his pillow when a child: it was the song of the Scarlet Hunter. And the charm sufficed; for suddenly of a cheerless morning they came upon a trapper's hut in the wilderness, where their sufferings ceased, and the sight of Shon's eyes came back. When strength returned also, they journeyed to an Indian village, where a priest laboured. Him they besought; and when spring came they set forth to Lonely Valley again that the woman and the smothered dead—if it might chance so—should be put away into peaceful graves. But thither coming they only saw a grey and churlish river; and the poppet-head of the mine of St. Gabriel, and she who had knelt thereon, were vanished into solitudes, where only God's cohorts have the rights of burial. . . .

But the priest prayed humbly for their so swiftly-summoned souls.

THE SCARLET HUNTER

THE SCARLET HUNTER

"News out of Egypt!" said the Honourable Just Trafford. "If this is true, it gives a pretty finish to the season. You think it possible, Pierre? It is every man's talk that there isn't a herd of buffaloes in the whole country; but this—eh?"

Pierre did not seem disposed to answer. He had been watching a man's face for some time; but his eyes were now idly following the smoke of his cigarette as it floated away to the ceiling in fading circles. He seemed to take no interest in Trafford's remarks, nor in the tale that Shangi the Indian had told them; though Shangi and his tale were both sufficiently uncommon to justify attention.

Shon McGann was more impressionable. His eyes swam; his feet shifted nervously with enjoyment; he glanced frequently at his gun in the corner of the hut; he had watched Trafford's face with some anxiety, and accepted the result of the tale with delight. Now his look was occupied with Pierre.

Pierre was a pretty good authority in all matters concerning the prairies and the North. He also had an instinct for detecting veracity, having practised on both sides of the equation. Trafford became impatient, and at last the half-breed, conscious that he had tried the temper of his chief so far as was safe, lifted his eyes, and, resting them casually on the Indian, replied: "Yes, I know the place. . . . No, I have not been there, but I was told—ah, it was long ago! There is a great valley

between hills, the Kimash Hills, the hills of the Mighty Men. The woods are deep and dark; there is but one trail through them, and it is old. On the highest hill is a vast mound. In that mound are the forefathers of a nation that is gone. Yes, as you say, they are dead, and there is none of them alive in the valley—which is called the White Valley—where the buffalo are. The valley is green in summer, and the snow is not deep in winter; the noses of the buffalo can find the tender grass. The Injin speaks the truth, perhaps. But of the number of buffaloes, one must see. The eye of the red man multiplies."

Trafford looked at Pierre closely. "You seem to know the place very well. It is a long way north where —ah yes, you said you had never been there; you were told. Who told you?"

The half-breed raised his eyebrows slightly as he replied: "I can remember a long time, and my mother, she spoke much and sang many songs at the camp-fires." Then he puffed his cigarette so that the smoke clouded his face for a moment, and went on,—"I think there may be buffaloes."

"It's along the barrel of me gun I wish I was lookin' at thim now," said McGann.

"*Tiens*, you will go?" inquired Pierre of Trafford.

"To have a shot at the only herd of wild buffaloes on the continent! Of course I'll go. I'd go to the North Pole for that. Sport and novelty I came here to see; buffalo-hunting I did not expect. I'm in luck, that's all. We'll start to-morrow morning, if we can get ready, and Shangi here will lead us; eh, Pierre?"

The half-breed again was not polite. Instead of replying he sang almost below his breath the words of a

song unfamiliar to his companions, though the Indian's eyes showed a flash of understanding. These were the words:

"They ride away with a waking wind,—away, away!
With laughing lip and with jocund mind at break of day.
A rattle of hoofs and a snatch of song,—they ride, they ride!
The plains are wide and the path is long,—so long, so wide!"

Just Trafford appeared ready to deal with this insolence, for the half-breed was after all a servant of his, a paid retainer. He waited, however. Shon saw the difficulty, and at once volunteered a reply. "It's aisy enough to get away in the mornin', but it's a question how far we'll be able to go with the horses. The year is late; but there's dogs beyand, I suppose, and bedad, there y' are!"

The Indian spoke slowly: "It is far off. There is no colour yet in the leaf of the larch. The river-hen still swims northward. It is good that we go. There is much buffalo in the White Valley."

Again Trafford looked towards his follower, and again the half-breed, as if he were making an effort to remember, sang abstractedly:

"They follow, they follow a lonely trail, by day, by night,
By distant sun, and by fire-fly pale, and northern light.
The ride to the Hills of the Mighty Men, so swift they go!
Where buffalo feed in the wilding glen in sun and snow."

"Pierre," said Trafford, sharply, "I want an answer to my question."

"*Mais, pardon,* I was thinking . . . well, we can ride until the deep snows come, then we can walk; and Shangi, he can get the dogs, maybe, one team of dogs."

"But," was the reply, "one team of dogs will not be

enough. We'll bring meat and hides, you know, as well as pemmican. We won't *cache* any carcases up there. What would be the use? We shall have to be back in the Pipi Valley by the spring-time."

"Well," said the half-breed with a cold decision, "one team of dogs will be enough; and we will not *cache*, and we shall be back in the Pipi Valley before the spring, perhaps." But this last word was spoken under his breath.

And now the Indian spoke, with his deep voice and dignified manner: "Brothers, it is as I have said,—the trail is lonely and the woods are deep and dark. Since the time when the world was young, no white man hath been there save one, and behold sickness fell on him; the grave is his end. It is a pleasant land, for the gods have blessed it to the Indian forever. No heathen shall possess it. But you shall see the White Valley and the buffalo. Shangi will lead, because you have been merciful to him, and have given him to sleep in your wigwam, and to eat of your wild meat. There are dogs in the forest. I have spoken."

Trafford was impressed, and annoyed too. He thought too much sentiment was being squandered on a very practical and sportive thing. He disliked functions; speech-making was to him a matter for prayer and fasting. The Indian's address was therefore more or less gratuitous, and he hastened to remark: "Thank you, Shangi; that's very good, and you've put it poetically. You've turned a shooting-excursion into a mediæval romance. But we'll get down to business now, if you please, and make the romance a fact, beautiful enough to send to the *Times* or the New York *Call*. Let's see, how would they put it in the *Call*?—'Extraordinary Discovery—Herd of buffaloes found in the far

North by an Englishman and his Franco-Irish Party—Sport for the gods—Exodus of *brûlés* to White Valley!' —and so on, screeching to the end."

Shon laughed heartily. "The fun of the world is in the thing," he said; "and a day it would be for a notch on a stick and a rasp of gin in the throat. And if I get the sight of me eye on a buffalo-ruck, it's down on me knees I'll go, and not for prayin' aither. Here's both hands up for a start in the mornin'!"

Long before noon next day they were well on their way. Trafford could not understand why Pierre was so reserved, and, when speaking, so ironical. It was noticeable that the half-breed watched the Indian closely, that he always rode behind him, that he never drank out of the same cup. The leader set this down to the natural uncertainty of Pierre's disposition. He had grown to like Pierre, as the latter had come in course to respect him. Each was a man of value after his kind. Each also had recognised in the other qualities of force and knowledge having their generation in experiences which had become individuality, subterranean and acute, under a cold surface. It was the mutual recognition of these equivalents that led the two men to mutual trust, only occasionally disturbed, as has been shown; though one was regarded as the most fastidious man of his set in London, the fairest-minded of friends, the most comfortable of companions; while the other was an outlaw, a half-heathen, a lover of but one thing in this world,—the joyous god of Chance. Pierre was essentially a gamester. He would have extracted satisfaction out of a death-sentence which was contingent on the trumping of an ace. His only honour was the honour of the game.

Now, with all the swelling prairie sloping to the clear

horizon, and the breath of a large life in their nostrils, these two men were caught up suddenly, as it were, by the throbbing soul of the North, so that the subterranean life in them awoke and startled them. Trafford conceived that tobacco was the charm with which to exorcise the spirits of the past. Pierre let the game of sensations go on, knowing that they pay themselves out in time. His scheme was the wiser. The other found that fast riding and smoking were not sufficient. He became surrounded by the ghosts of yesterdays; and at length he gave up striving with them, and let them storm upon him, until a line of pain cut deeply across his forehead, and bitterly and unconsciously he cried aloud,—"Hester, ah, Hester!"

But having spoken, the spell was broken, and he was aware of the beat of hoofs beside him, and Shangi the Indian looking at him with a half smile. Something in the look thrilled him; it was fantastic, masterful. He wondered that he had not noticed this singular influence before. After all, he was only a savage with cleaner buckskin than his race usually wore. Yet that glow, that power in the face—was he Piegan, Blackfoot, Cree, Blood? Whatever he was, this man had heard the words which broke so painfully from him.

He saw the Indian frame *her* name upon his lips, and then came the words, "Hester—Hester Orval!"

He turned sternly, and said, "Who are you? What do you know of Hester Orval?"

The Indian shook his head gravely, and replied, "You spoke her name, my brother."

"I spoke one word of her name. You have spoken two."

"One does not know what one speaks. There are words which are as sounds, and words which are as

feelings. Those come to the brain through the ear; these to the soul through sign, which is more than sound. The Indian hath knowledge, even as the white man; and because his heart is open, the trees whisper to him; he reads the language of the grass and the wind, and is taught by the song of the bird, the screech of the hawk, the bark of the fox. And so he comes to know the heart of the man who hath sickness, and calls upon someone, even though it be a weak woman, to cure his sickness; who is bowed low as beside a grave, and would stand upright. Are not my words wise? As the thoughts of a child that dreams, as the face of the blind, the eye of the beast, or the anxious hand of the poor,—are they not simple, and to be understood?"

Just Trafford made no reply. But behind, Pierre was singing in the plaintive measure of a chant:

"A hunter rideth the herd abreast,
The Scarlet Hunter from out of the West,
Whose arrows with points of flame are drest,
Who loveth the beast of the field the best,
The child and the young bird out of the nest,—
They ride to the hunt no more,—no more!"

They travelled beyond all bounds of civilisation; beyond the northernmost Indian villages, until the features of the landscape became more rugged and solemn, and at last they paused at a place which the Indian called Misty Mountain, and where, disappearing for an hour, he returned with a team of Eskimo dogs, keen, quick-tempered, and enduring. They had all now recovered from the disturbing sentiments of the first portion of the journey; life was at full tide; the spirit of the hunter was on them.

At length one night they camped in a vast pine grove

wrapped in coverlets of snow and silent as death. Here again Pierre became moody and alert and took no part in the careless chat at the camp-fire led by Shon McGann. The man brooded and looked mysterious. Mystery was not pleasing to Trafford. He had his own secrets, but in the ordinary affairs of life he preferred simplicity. In one of the silences that fell between Shon's attempts to give hilarity to the occasion, there came a rumbling far-off sound, a sound that increased in volume till the earth beneath them responded gently to the vibration. Trafford looked up inquiringly at Pierre, and then at the Indian, who, after a moment, said slowly: "Above us are the hills of the Mighty Men, beneath us is the White Valley. It is the tramp of buffalo that we hear. A storm is coming, and they go to shelter in the mountains."

The information had come somewhat suddenly, and McGann was the first to recover from the pleasant shock: "It's divil a wink of sleep I'll get this night, with the thought of them below there ripe for slaughter, and the tumble of fight in their beards."

Pierre, with a meaning glance from his half-closed eyes, added: "But it is the old saying of the prairies that you do not shout *dinner* till you have your knife in the loaf. Your knife is not yet in the loaf, Shon McGann."

The boom of the trampling ceased, and now there was a stirring in the snow-clad tree tops, and a sound as if all the birds of the North were flying overhead. The weather began to moan and the boles of the pines to quake. And then there came war,—a trouble out of the north,—a wave of the breath of God to show inconsequent man that he who seeks to live by slaughter hath slaughter for his master.

They hung over the fire while the forest cracked round them, and the flame smarted with the flying snow. And now the trees, as if the elements were closing in on them, began to break close by, and one lurched forward towards them. Trafford, to avoid its stroke, stepped quickly aside right into the line of another which he did not see. Pierre sprang forward and swung him clear, but was himself struck senseless by an outreaching branch.

As if satisfied with this achievement, the storm began to subside. When Pierre recovered consciousness Trafford clasped his hand and said,—"You've a sharp eye, a quick thought, and a deft arm, comrade."

"Ah, it was in the game. It is good play to assist your partner," the half-breed replied sententiously.

Through all, the Indian had remained stoical. But McGann, who swore by Trafford—as he had once sworn by another of the Trafford race—had his heart on his lips, and said:

> "There's a swate little cherub that sits up aloft,
> Who cares for the soul of poor Jack!"

It was long after midnight ere they settled down again, with the wreck of the forest round them. Only the Indian slept; the others were alert and restless. They were up at daybreak, and on their way before sunrise, filled with desire for prey. They had not travelled far before they emerged upon a plateau. Around them were the hills of the Mighty Men—austere, majestic; at their feet was a vast valley on which the light newly-fallen snow had not hidden all the grass. Lonely and lofty, it was a world waiting chastely to be peopled! And now it was peopled, for

there came from a cleft of the hills an army of buffaloes lounging slowly down the waste, with tossing manes and hoofs stirring the snow into a feathery scud.

The eyes of Trafford and McGann swam; Pierre's face was troubled, and strangely enough he made the sign of the cross.

At that instant Trafford saw smoke issuing from a spot on the mountain opposite. He turned to the Indian: "Someone lives there?" he said.

"It is the home of the dead, but life is also there."

"White man, or Indian?"

But no reply came. The Indian pointed instead to the buffalo rumbling down the valley. Trafford forgot the smoke, forgot everything except that splendid quarry. Shon was excited. "Sarpints alive," he said, "look at the troops of thim! Is it standin' here we are with our tongues in our cheeks, whin there's bastes to be killed, and mate to be got, and the call to war on the ground below! Clap spurs with your heels, sez I, and down the side of the turf together and give 'em the teeth of our guns!" The Irishman dashed down the slope. In an instant, all followed, or at least Trafford thought all followed, swinging their guns across their saddles to be ready for this excellent foray. But while Pierre rode hard, it was at first without the fret of battle in him, and he smiled strangely, for he knew that the Indian had disappeared as they rode down the slope, though how and why he could not tell. There ran through his head tales chanted at camp-fires when he was not yet in stature so high as the loins that bore him. They rode hard, and yet they came no nearer to that flying herd straining on with white streaming breath and the surf of snow rising to their quarters. Mile upon mile, and yet they could not ride these monsters down!

Now Pierre was leading. There was a kind of fury in his face, and he seemed at last to gain on them. But as the herd veered close to a wall of stalwart pines, a horseman issued from the trees and joined the cattle. The horseman was in scarlet from head to foot; and with his coming the herd went faster, and ever faster, until they vanished into the mountain-side; and they who pursued drew in their trembling horses and stared at each other with wonder in their faces.

"In God's name what does it mean?" Trafford cried.

"Is it a trick of the eye or the hand of the devil?" added Shon.

"In the name of God we shall know perhaps. If it is the hand of the devil it is not good for us," remarked Pierre.

"Who was the man in scarlet who came from the woods?" asked Trafford of the half-breed.

"*Voilà*, it is strange! There is an old story among the Indians! My mother told many tales of the place and sang of it, as I sang to you. The legend was this:—In the hills of the North which no white man, nor no Injin of this time hath seen, the forefathers of the red men sleep; but some day they will wake again and go forth and possess all the land; and the buffalo are for them when that time shall come, that they may have the fruits of the chase, and that it be as it was of old, when the cattle were as clouds on the horizon. And it was ordained that one of these mighty men who had never been vanquished in fight, nor done an evil thing, and was the greatest of all the chiefs, should live and not die, but be as a sentinel, as a lion watching, and preserve the White Valley in peace until his brethren waked and came into their own again. And him they called the Scarlet Hunter; and to this hour the red men pray to

him when they lose their way upon the plains, or Death draws aside the curtains of the wigwam to call them forth."

"Repeat the verses you sang, Pierre," said Trafford.

The half-breed did so. When he came to the words, "Who loveth the beast of the field the best," the Englishman looked round. "Where is Shangi?" he asked.

McGann shook his head in astonishment and negation. Pierre explained: "On the mountain-side where we ride down he is not seen—he vanish . . . *mon Dieu*, look!"

On the slope of the mountain stood the Scarlet Hunter with drawn bow. From it an arrow flew over their heads with a sorrowful *twang*, and fell where the smoke rose among the pines; then the mystic figure disappeared.

McGann shuddered, and drew himself together. "It is the place of spirits," he said; "and it's little I like it, God knows; but I'll follow that Scarlet Hunter, or red devil, or whatever he is, till I drop, if the Honourable gives the word. For flesh and blood I'm not afraid of; and the other we come to, whether we will or not, one day."

But Trafford said: "No, we'll let it stand where it is for the present. Something has played our eyes false, or we're brought here to do work different from buffalo-hunting. Where that arrow fell among the smoke we must go first. Then, as I read the riddle, we travel back the way we came. There are points in connection with the Pipi Valley superior to the hills of the Mighty Men."

They rode away across the glade, and through a grove of pines upon a hill, till they stood before a log hut with parchment windows.

Trafford knocked, but there was no response. He opened the door and entered. He saw a figure rise painfully from a couch in a corner,—the figure of a woman young and beautiful, but wan and worn. She seemed dazed and inert with suffering, and spoke mournfully: "It is too late. Not you, nor any of your race, nor anything on earth can save him. He is dead—dead now."

At the first sound of her voice Trafford started. He drew near to her, as pale as she was, and wonder and pity were in his face. "Hester," he said, "Hester Orval!"

She stared at him like one that had been awakened from an evil dream, then tottered towards him with the cry,—"Just, Just, have you come to save me? O Just!" His distress was sad to see, for it was held in deep repression, but he said calmly and with protecting gentleness: "Yes, I have come to save you. Hester, how is it you are here in this strange place—you?"

She sobbed so that at first she could not answer; but at last she cried: "O Just, he is dead . . . in there, in there! . . . Last night, it was last night; and he prayed that I might go with him. But I could not die unforgiven,—and I was right, for you have come out of the world to help me, and to save me."

"Yes, to help you and to save you,—if I can," he added in a whisper to himself, for he was full of foreboding. He was of the earth, earthy, and things that had chanced to him this day were beyond the natural and healthy movements of his mind. He had gone forth to slay, and had been foiled by shadows; he had come with a tragic, if beautiful, memory haunting him, and that memory had clothed itself in flesh and stood before him, pitiful, solitary,—a woman. He had scorned all

legend and superstition, and here both were made manifest to him. He had thought of this woman as one who was of this world no more, and here she mourned before him and bade him go and look upon her dead, upon the man who had wronged him, into whom, as he once declared, the soul of a cur had entered,—and now what could he say? He had carried in his heart the infinite something that is to men the utmost fulness of life, which, losing, they must carry lead upon their shoulders where they thought the gods had given pinions.

McGann and Pierre were nervous. This conjunction of unusual things was easier to the intelligences of the dead than the quick. The outer air was perhaps less charged with the unnatural, and with a glance towards the room where death was quartered, they left the hut.

Trafford was alone with the woman through whom his life had been turned awry. He looked at her searchingly; and as he looked the mere man in him asserted itself for a moment. She was dressed in coarse garments; it struck him that her grief had a touch of commonness about it; there was something imperfect in the dramatic setting. His recent experiences had had a kind of grandeur about them; it was not thus that he had remembered her in the hour when he had called upon her in the plains, and the Indian had heard his cry. He felt, and was ashamed in feeling, that there was a grim humour in the situation. The fantastic, the melodramatic, the emotional, were huddled here in too marked a prominence; it all seemed, for an instant, like the tale of a woman's first novel. But immediately again there was roused in him the latent force of loyalty to himself and therefore to her; the story of her past, so far as he knew it, flashed before him, and his eyes grew hot.

He remembered the time he had last seen her in an English country-house among a gay party in which royalty smiled, and the subject was content beneath the smile. But there was one rebellious subject, and her name was Hester Orval. She was a wilful girl who had lived life selfishly within the lines of that decorous yet pleasant convention to which she was born. She was beautiful,—she knew that, and royalty had graciously admitted it. She was warm-thoughted, and possessed the fatal strain of the artistic temperament. She was not sure that she had a heart; and many others, not of her sex, after varying and enthusiastic study of the matter, were not more confident than she. But it had come at last that she had listened with pensive pleasure to Trafford's tale of love; and because to be worshipped by a man high in all men's, and in most women's, esteem, ministered delicately to her sweet egotism, and because she was proud of him, she gave him her hand in promise, and her cheek in privilege, but denied him—though he knew this not—her heart and the service of her life. But he was content to wait patiently for that service, and he wholly trusted her, for there was in him some fine spirit of the antique world.

There had come to Falkenstowe, this country-house and her father's home, a man who bore a knightly name, but who had no knightly heart; and he told Ulysses' tales, and covered a hazardous and cloudy past with that fascinating colour which makes evil appear to be good, so that he roused in her the pulse of art, which she believed was soul and life, and her allegiance swerved. And when her mother pleaded with her, and when her father said stern things, and even royalty, with uncommon use, rebuked her gently, her heart grew hard; and almost on the eve of her wedding-day she

fled with her lover, and married him, and together they sailed away over the seas.

The world was shocked and clamorous for a matter of nine days, and then it forgot this foolish and awkward circumstance; but Just Trafford never forgot it. He remembered all vividly until the hour, a year later, when London journals announced that Hester Orval and her husband had gone down with a vessel wrecked upon the Alaskan and Canadian coast. And there new regret began, and his knowledge of her ended.

But she and her husband had not been drowned; with a sailor they had reached the shore in safety. They had travelled inland from the coast through the great mountains by unknown paths, and as they travelled, the sailor died; and they came at last through innumerable hardships to the Kimash Hills, the hills of the Mighty Men, and there they stayed. It was not an evil land; it had neither deadly cold in winter nor wanton heat in summer. But they never saw a human face, and everything was lonely and spectral. For a time they strove to go eastwards or southwards but the mountains were impassable, and in the north and west there was no hope. Though the buffalo swept by them in the valley they could not slay them, and they lived on forest fruits until in time the man sickened. The woman nursed him faithfully, but still he failed; and when she could go forth no more for food, some unseen dweller of the woods brought buffalo meat, and prairie fowl, and water from the spring, and laid them beside her door.

She had seen the mounds upon the hill, the wide couches of the sleepers, and she remembered the things done in the days when God seemed nearer to the sons of men than now; and she said that a spirit had done this thing, and trembled and was thankful. But the

man weakened and knew that he should die, and one night when the pain was sharp upon him he prayed bitterly that he might pass, or that help might come to snatch him from the grave. And as they sobbed together, a form entered at the door,—a form clothed in scarlet,—and he bade them tell the tale of their lives as they would some time tell it unto heaven. And when the tale was told he said that succour should come to them from the south by the hand of the Scarlet Hunter, that the nation sleeping there should no more be disturbed by their moaning. And then he had gone forth, and with his going there was a storm such as that in which the man had died, the storm that had assailed the hunters in the forest yesterday.

This was the second part of Hester Orval's life as she told it to Just Trafford. And he, looking into her eyes, knew that she had suffered, and that she had sounded her husband's unworthiness. Then he turned from her and went into the room where the dead man lay. And there all hardness passed from him, and he understood that in the great going forth man reckons to the full with the deeds done in that brief pilgrimage called life; and that in the bitter journey which this one took across the dread spaces between Here and There, he had repented of his sins, because they, and they only, went with him in mocking company; the good having gone first to plead where evil is a debtor and hath a prison. And the woman came and stood beside Trafford, and whispered, "At first—and at the last—he was kind."

But he urged her gently from the room: "Go away," he said; "go away. We cannot judge him. Leave me alone with him."

They buried him upon the hill-side, far from the

mounds where the Mighty Men waited for their summons to go forth and be the lords of the North again. At night they buried him when the moon was at its full; and he had the fragrant pines for his bed, and the warm darkness to cover him; and though he is to those others resting there a heathen and an alien, it may be that he sleeps peacefully.

When Trafford questioned Hester Orval more deeply of her life there, the unearthly look quickened in her eyes, and she said: "Oh, nothing, nothing is real here, but suffering; perhaps it is all a dream, but it has changed me, changed me. To hear the tread of the flying herds, to see no being save him, the Scarlet Hunter, to hear the voices calling in the night! . . . Hush! There, do you not hear them? It is midnight —listen!"

He listened, and Pierre and Shon McGann looked at each other apprehensively, while Shon's fingers felt hurriedly along the beads of a rosary which he did not hold. Yes, they heard it, a deep sonorous sound: "Is the daybreak come?" "It is still the night," came the reply as of one clear voice. And then there floated through the hills more softly: "We sleep—we sleep!" And the sounds echoed through the valley—"Sleep—sleep!"

Yet though these things were full of awe, the spirit of the place held them there, and the fever of the hunter descended on them hotly. In the morning they went forth, and rode into the White Valley where the buffalo were feeding, and sought to steal upon them; but the shots from their guns only awoke the hills, and none were slain. And though they rode swiftly, the wide surf of snow was ever between them and the chase, and their striving availed nothing. Day after day they followed

that flying column, and night after night they heard the sleepers call from the hills. The desire of the thing wasted them, and they forgot to eat and ceased to talk among themselves. But one day Shon McGann, muttering *aves* as he rode, gained on the cattle, until once again the Scarlet Hunter came forth from a cleft of the mountains, and drove the herd forward with swifter feet. But the Irishman had learned the power in this thing, and had taught Trafford, who knew not those availing prayers, and with these sacred conjurations on their lips they gained on the cattle length by length, though the Scarlet Hunter rode abreast of the thundering horde. Within easy range, Trafford swung his gun shoulderwards to fire, but at that instant a cloud of snow rose up between him and his quarry so that they all were blinded. And when they came into the clear sun again the buffalo were gone; but flaming arrows from some unseen hunter's bow came singing over their heads towards the south; and they obeyed the sign, and went back to where Hester wore her life out with anxiety for them, because she knew the hopelessness of their quest. Women are nearer to the heart of things. And now she begged Trafford to go southwards before winter froze the plains impassably, and the snow made tombs of the valleys. Thereupon he gave the word to go, and said that he had done wrong —for now the spell was falling from him.

But she, seeing his regret, said: "Ah, Just, it could not have been different. The passion of it was on you as it was on us, as if to teach us that hunger for happiness is robbery, and that the covetous desire of man is not the will of the gods. The herds are for the Mighty Men when they awake, not for the stranger and the Philistine."

"You have grown wise, Hester," he replied.

"No, I am sick in brain and body; but it may be that in such sickness there is wisdom."

"Ah," he said, "it has turned my head, I think. Once I laughed at all such fanciful things as these. This Scarlet Hunter,—how many times have you seen him?"

"But once."

"What were his looks?"

"A face pale and strong, with noble eyes; and in his voice there was something strange."

Trafford thought of Shangi, the Indian,—where had he gone? He had disappeared as suddenly as he had come to their camp in the South.

As they sat silent in the growing night, the door opened and the Scarlet Hunter stood before them.

"There is food," he said, "on the threshold—food for those who go upon a far journey to the South in the morning. Unhappy are they who seek for gold at the rainbow's foot, who chase the fire-fly in the night, who follow the herds in the White Valley. Wise are they who anger not the gods, and who fly before the rising storm. There is a path from the valley for the strangers, the path by which they came; and when the sun stares forth again upon the world, the way shall be open, and there shall be safety for you until your travel ends in the quick world whither you go. You were foolish; now you are wise. It is time to depart; seek not to return, that we may have peace and you safety. When the world cometh to her spring again we shall meet." Then he turned and was gone, with Trafford's voice ringing after him,—"Shangi! Shangi!"

They ran out swiftly, but he had vanished. In the valley where the moonlight fell in icy coldness a herd of cattle was moving, and their breath rose like the

spray from sea-beaten rocks, and the sound of their breathing was borne upwards to the watchers.

At daybreak they rode down into the valley. All was still. Not a trace of life remained; not a hoof-mark in the snow, nor a bruised blade of grass. And when they climbed to the plateau and looked back, it seemed to Trafford and his companions, as it seemed in after years, that this thing had been all a fantasy. But Hester's face was beside them, and it told of strange and unsubstantial things. The shadows of the middle world were upon her. And yet again when they turned at the last there was no token. It was a northern valley, with sun and snow, and cold blue shadows, and the high hills,—that was all.

Then Hester said: "O Just, I do not know if this is life or death—and yet it must be death, for after death there is forgiveness to those who repent, and your face is forgiving and kind."

And he—for he saw that she needed much human help and comfort—gently laid his hand on hers and replied: "Hester, this is life, a new life for both of us. Whatever has been was a dream; whatever is now" —and he folded her hand in his—"is real; and there is no such thing as forgiveness to be spoken of between us. There shall be happiness for us yet, please God!"

"I want to go to Falkenstowe. Will—will my mother forgive me?"

"Mothers always forgive, Hester, else half the world had slain itself in shame."

And then she smiled for the first time since he had seen her. This was in the shadows of the scented pines; and a new life breathed upon her, as it breathed upon them all, and they knew that the fever of the White Valley had passed away from them forever.

After many hardships they came in safety to the regions of the south country again; and the tale they told, though doubted by the race of pale-faces, was believed by the heathen; because there was none among them but, as he cradled at his mother's breasts, and from his youth up, had heard the legend of the Scarlet Hunter.

For the romance of that journey, it concerned only the man and woman to whom it was as wine and meat to the starving. Is not love more than legend, and a human heart than all the beasts of the field or any joy of slaughter?

THE STONE

THE STONE

The Stone hung on a jutting crag of Purple Hill. On one side of it, far beneath, lay the village, huddled together as if, through being close compacted, its handful of humanity should not be a mere dust in the balance beside Nature's portentousness. Yet if one stood beside The Stone, and looked down, the flimsy wooden huts looked like a barrier at the end of a great flume. For the hill hollowed and narrowed from The Stone to the village, as if giants had made this concave path by trundling boulders to that point like a funnel where the miners' houses now formed a *cul-de-sac*. On the other side of the crag was a valley also; but it was lonely and untenanted; and at one flank of The Stone were serried legions of trees.

The Stone was a mighty and wonderful thing. Looked at from the village direct, it had nothing but the sky for a background. At times, also, it appeared to rest on nothing; and many declared that they could see clean between it and the oval floor of the crag on which it rested. That was generally in the evening, when the sun was setting behind it. Then the light coiled round its base, between it and its pedestal, thus making it appear to hover above the hill-point, or, planet-like, to be just settling on it. At other times, when the light was perfectly clear and not too strong, and the village side of the crag was brighter than the other, more accurate relations of The Stone to its pedestal could be discovered. Then one would say that

it balanced on a tiny base, a toe of granite. But if one looked long, especially in the summer, when the air throbbed, it evidently rocked upon that toe; if steadily, and very long, he grew tremulous, perhaps afraid. Once, a woman who was about to become a mother went mad, because she thought The Stone would hurtle down the hill at her great moment and destroy her and her child. Indians would not live either on the village side of The Stone or in the valley beyond. They had a legend that, some day, one, whom they called The Man Who Sleeps, would rise from his hidden couch in the mountains, and, being angry that any dared to cumber his playground, would hurl The Stone upon them that dwelt at Purple Hill. But white men pay little heed to Indian legends.

At one time or another every person who had come to the village visited The Stone. Colossal as it was, the real base on which its weight rested was actually very small: the view from the village had not been all deceitful. It is possible, indeed, that at one time it had really rocked, and that the rocking had worn for it a shallow cup, or socket, in which it poised. The first man who came to Purple Valley prospecting had often stopped his work and looked at The Stone in a half-fear that it would spring upon him unawares. And yet he had as often laughed at himself for doing so, since, as he said, it must have been there hundreds of thousands of years. Strangers, when they came to the village, went to sleep somewhat timidly the first night of their stay, and not infrequently left their beds to go and look at The Stone, as it hung there ominously in the light of the moon; or listened towards it if it was dark. When the moon rose late, and The Stone chanced to be directly in front of it, a black sphere seemed to be rolling into the light to blot it out.

But none who lived in the village looked upon The Stone in quite the same fashion as did that first man who had come to the valley. He had seen it through three changing seasons, with no human being near him, and only occasionally a shy, wandering elk, or a cloud of wild ducks whirring down the pass, to share his companionship with it. Once he had waked in the early morning, and, possessed of a strange feeling, had gone out to look at The Stone. There, perched upon it, was an eagle; and though he said to himself that an eagle's weight was to The Stone as a feather upon the world, he kept his face turned towards it all day; for all day the eagle stayed. He was a man of great stature and immense strength. The thews of his limbs stood out like soft unbreakable steel. Yet, as if to cast derision on his strength and great proportions, God or Fate turned his bread to ashes, gave failure into his hands where he hugely grasped at fortune, and hung him about with misery. He discovered gold, but others gathered it. It was his daughter that went mad, and gave birth to a dead child in fearsome thought of The Stone. Once, when he had gone over the hills to another mining field, and had been prevented from coming back by unexpected and heavy snows, his wife was taken ill, and died alone of starvation, because none in the village remembered of her and her needs. Again, one wild night, long after, his only son was taken from his bed and lynched for a crime that was none of his, as was discovered by his murderers next day. Then they killed horribly the real criminal, and offered the father such satisfaction as they could. They said that any one of them was ready there to be killed by him; and they threw a weapon at his feet. At this he stood looking upon them for a moment, his great breast heaving, and his eyes

glowering; but presently he reached out his arms, and taking two of them by the throat, brought their heads together heavily, breaking their skulls; and, with a cry in his throat like a wounded animal, left them, and entered the village no more. But it became known that he had built a rude hut on Purple Hill, and that he had been seen standing beside The Stone or sitting among the boulders below it, with his face bent upon the village. Those who had come near to him said that he had greatly changed; that his hair and beard had grown long and strong, and, in effect, that he looked like some rugged fragment of an antique world.

The time came when they associated The Man with The Stone: they grew to speak of him simply as The Man. There was something natural and apt in the association. Then they avoided these two singular dwellers on the height. What had happened to The Man when he lived in the village became almost as great a legend as the Indian fable concerning The Stone. In the minds of the people one seemed as old as the other. Women who knew the awful disasters which had befallen The Man brooded at times most timidly, regarding him as they did at first—and even still—The Stone. Women who carried life unborn about with them had a strange dread of both The Stone and The Man. Time passed on, and the feeling grew that The Man's grief must be a terrible thing, since he lived alone with The Stone and God. But this did not prevent the men of the village from digging gold, drinking liquor, and doing many kinds of evil. One day, again, they did an unjust and cruel thing. They took Pierre, the gambler, whom they had at first sought to vanquish at his own art, and, possessed suddenly of the high duty of citizenship, carried him to the edge of a hill and dropped

him over, thinking thereby to give him a quick death, while the vultures would provide him a tomb. But Pierre was not killed, though to his grave—unprepared as yet—he would bear an arm which should never be lifted higher than his shoulder. When he waked from the crashing gloom which succeeded the fall, he was in the presence of a being whose appearance was awesome and massive—an outlawed god: whose hair and beard were white, whose eye was piercing, absorbing, painful, in the long perspective of its woe. This being sat with his great hand clasped to the side of his head. The beginning of his look was the village, and—though the vision seemed infinite—the village was the end of it too. Pierre, looking through the doorway beside which he lay, drew in his breath sharply, for it seemed at first as if The Man was an unnatural fancy, and not a thing. Behind The Man was The Stone, which was not more motionless nor more full of age than this its comrade. Indeed, The Stone seemed more a thing of life as it poised above the hill: The Man was sculptured rock. His white hair was chiselled on his broad brow, his face was a solemn pathos petrified, his lips were curled with an iron contempt, an incalculable anger.

The sun went down, and darkness gathered about The Man. Pierre reached out his hand, and drank the water and ate the coarse bread that had been put near him. He guessed that trees or protruding ledges had broken his fall, and that he had been rescued and brought here. As he lay thinking, The Man entered the doorway, stooping much to do so. With flints he lighted a wick which hung from a wooden bowl of bear's oil; then kneeling, held it above his head, and looked at Pierre. And Pierre, who had never feared anyone, shrank from the look in The Man's eyes. But when the

other saw that Pierre was awake, a distant kindness came upon his face, and he nodded gravely; but he did not speak. Presently a great tremor as of pain shook all his limbs, and he set the candle on the ground, and with his stalwart hands arranged afresh the bandages about Pierre's injured arm and leg. Pierre spoke at last.

"You are The Man?" he said.

The other bowed his head.

"You saved me from those devils in the valley?"

A look of impregnable hardness came into The Man's face, but he pressed Pierre's hand for answer; and though the pressure was meant to be gentle, Pierre winced painfully. The candle spluttered, and the hut filled with a sickly smoke. The Man brought some bear skins and covered the sufferer, for, the season being autumn, the night was cold. Pierre, who had thus spent his first sane and conscious hour in many days, fell asleep. What time it was when he waked he was not sure, but it was to hear a metallic *click-click* come to him through the clear air of night. It was a pleasant noise as of steel and rock: the work of some lonely stone-cutter of the hills. The sound reached him with strange, increasing distinctness. Was this Titan that had saved him sculpturing some figure from the metal hill? *Click-click!* it vibrated as regularly as the keen pulse of a watch. He lay and wondered for a long time, but fell asleep again; and the steely iteration went on in his dreams.

In the morning The Man came to him, and cared for his hurts, and gave him food; but still would speak no word. He was gone nearly all day in the hills; yet when evening came he sought the place where Pierre had seen him the night before, and the same weird

scene was re-enacted. And again in the night the clicking sound went on; and every night it was renewed. Pierre grew stronger, and could, with difficulty, stand upon his feet. One night he crept out, and made his way softly, slowly towards the sound. He saw The Man kneeling beside The Stone, he saw a hammer rise and fall upon a chisel; and the chisel was at the base of The Stone. The hammer rose and fell with perfect but dreadful precision. Pierre turned and looked towards the village below, whose lights were burning like a bunch of fire-flies in the gloom. Again he looked at The Stone and The Man.

Then the thing came to him sharply. The Man was chiselling away the socket of The Stone, bringing it to that point of balance where the touch of a finger, the wing of a bird, or the whistle of a north-west wind, would send it down upon the offending and unsuspecting village.

The thought held him paralysed. The Man had nursed his revenge long past the thought of its probability by the people beneath. He had at first sat and watched the village, hated, and mused dreadfully upon the thing he had determined to do. Then he had worked a little, afterwards more, and now, lastly, since he had seen what they had done to Pierre, with the hot but firm eagerness of an avenging giant. Pierre had done some sad deeds in his time, and had tasted some sweet revenges, but nothing like to this had ever entered his brain. In that village were men who—as they thought—had cast him to a death fit only for a coward or a cur. Well, here was the most exquisite retaliation. Though his hand should not be in the thing, he could still be the cynical and approving spectator.

But yet: had all those people hovering about those

lights below done harm to him? He thought there were a few—and they were women—who would not have followed his tumbril to his death with cries of execration. The rest would have done so,—most of them did so,—not because he was a criminal, but because he was a victim, and because human nature as it is thirsts inordinately at times for blood and sacrifice—a living strain of the old barbaric instinct. He remembered that most of these people were concerned in having injured The Man. The few good women there had vile husbands; the few pardonable men had hateful wives: the village of Purple Hill was an ill affair.

He thought: now doubtfully, now savagely, now with irony.

The hammer and steel clicked on.

He looked at the lights of the village again.

Suddenly there came to his mind the words of a great man who sought to save a city manifold centuries ago. He was not sure that he wished to save this village; but there was a grim, almost grotesque, fitness in the thing that he now intended. He spoke out clearly through the night:

"'*Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten righteous shall be found there.*'"

The hammer stopped. There was a silence, in which the pines sighed lightly. Then, as if speaking was a labour, The Man replied in a deep, harsh voice:

"I will not spare it for ten's sake."

Again there was a silence, in which Pierre felt his maimed body bend beneath him; but presently the voice said,—"*Now!*"

At this the moon swung from behind a cloud. The Man stood behind The Stone. His arm was raised to

it. There was a moment's pause—it seemed like years to Pierre; a wind came softly crying out of the west, the moon hurried into the dark, and then a monster sprang from its pedestal upon Purple Hill, and, with a sound of thunder and an awful speed, raced upon the village below. The boulders of the hillside crumbled after it.

And Pierre saw the lights go out.

The moon shone out again for an instant, and Pierre saw that The Man stood where The Stone had been; but when he reached the place The Man was gone. Forever!

THE TALL MASTER

THE TALL MASTER

The story has been so much tossed about in the mouths of Indians, and half-breeds, and men of the Hudson's Bay Company, that you are pretty sure to hear only an apocryphal version of the thing as you now travel in the North. But Pretty Pierre was at Fort Luke when the battle occurred, and, before and after, he sifted the business thoroughly. For he had a philosophical turn, and this may be said of him, that he never lied except to save another from danger. In this matter he was cool and impartial from first to last, and evil as his reputation was in many ways there were those who believed and trusted him. Himself, as he travelled here and there through the North, had heard of the Tall Master. Yet he had never met anyone who had seen him; for the Master had dwelt, it was said, chiefly among the strange tribes of the Far-Off Metal River whose faces were almost white, and who held themselves aloof from the southern races. The tales lost nothing by being retold, even when the historians were the men of the H. B. C.;—Pierre knew what accomplished liars may be found among that Company of Adventurers trading in Hudson's Bay, and how their art had been none too delicately engrafted by his own people. But he was, as became him, open to conviction, especially when, journeying to Fort Luke, he heard what John Hybar, the Chief Factor—a man of uncommon quality—had to say. Hybar had once lived long among those Indians of the Bright Stone, and had seen many rare things

among them. He knew their legends of the White Valley and the Hills of the Mighty Men, and how their distinctive character had imposed itself on the whole Indian race of the North, so that there was none but believed, even though vaguely, in a pleasant land not south but Arcticwards; and Pierre himself, with Shon McGann and Just Trafford, had once had a strange experience in the Kimash Hills. He did not share the opinion of Lazenby, the Company's clerk at Fort Luke, who said, when the matter was talked of before him, that it was all *hanky-panky*,—which was evidence that he had lived in London town, before his anxious relatives, sending him forth under the delusive flag of adventure and wild life, imprisoned him in the Arctic regions with the H. B. C.

Lazenby admired Pierre; said he was good stuff, and voted him amusing, with an ingenious emphasis of heathen oaths; but advised him, as only an insolent young scoundrel can, to forswear securing, by the seductive game of poker or euchre, larger interest on his capital than the H. B. C.; whose record, he insisted, should never be rivalled by any single man in any single lifetime. Then he incidentally remarked that he would like to empty the Company's cash-box once—only once; —thus reconciling the preacher and the sinner, as many another has done. Lazenby's morals were not bad, however. He was simply fond of making them appear terrible; even when in London he was more idle than wicked. He gravely suggested at last, as a kind of climax, that he and Pierre should go out on the pad together. This was a mere stroke of pleasantry on his part, because, the most he could loot in that far North were furs and *caches* of buffalo meat; and a man's capacity and use for them were limited. Even Pierre's

especial faculty and art seemed valueless so far Polewards; but he had his beat throughout the land, and he kept it like a perfect patrolman. He had not been at Fort Luke for years, and he would not be there again for more years; but it was certain that he would go on reappearing till he vanished utterly. At the end of the first week of this visit at Fort Luke, so completely had he conquered the place, that he had won from the Chief Factor the year's purchases of skins, the stores, and the Fort itself; and every stitch of clothing owned by Lazenby: so that, if he had insisted on the redemption of the debts, the H. B. C. and Lazenby had been naked and hungry in the wilderness. But Pierre was not a hard creditor. He instantly and nonchalantly said that the Fort would be useless to him, and handed it back again with all therein, on a most humorously constructed ninety-nine years' lease; while Lazenby was left in pawn. Yet Lazenby's mind was not at certain ease; he had a wholesome respect for Pierre's singularities, and dreaded being suddenly called upon to pay his debt before he could get his new clothes made,—maybe, in the presence of Wind Driver, chief of the Golden Dogs, and his demure and charming daughter, Wine Face, who looked upon him with the eye of affection—a matter fully, but not ostentatiously, appreciated by Lazenby. If he could have entirely forgotten a pretty girl in South Kensington, who, at her parents' bidding, turned her shoulder on him, he would have married Wine Face; and so he told Pierre. But the half-breed had only a sardonic sympathy for such weakness.

Things changed at once when Shon McGann arrived. He should have come before, according to a promise given Pierre, but there were reasons for the delay; and these Shon elaborated in his finely picturesque style.

He said that he had lost his way after he left the Wapiti Woods, and should never have found it again, had it not been for a strange being who came upon him and took him to the camp of the White Hand Indians, and cared for him there, and sent him safely on his way again to Fort Luke.

"Sorra wan did I ever see like him," said Shon, "with a face that was divil this minute and saint the next; pale in the cheek, and black in the eye, and grizzled hair flowin' long at his neck and lyin' like snakes on his shoulders; and whin his fingers closed on yours, be-dad! they didn't seem human at all, for they clamped you so cold and strong."

"'For they clamped you so cold and strong,'" replied Pierre, mockingly, yet greatly interested, as one could see by the upward range of his eye towards Shon. "Well, what more?"

"Well, squeeze the acid from y'r voice, Pierre; for there's things that better become you: and listen to me, for I've news for all here at the Fort, before I've done, which'll open y'r eyes with a jerk."

"With a wonderful jerk, *holà!* let us prepare, messieurs, to be waked with an Irish jerk!" and Pierre pensively trifled with the fringe on Shon's buckskin jacket, which was whisked from his fingers with smothered anger. For a few moments he was silent; but the eager looks of the Chief Factor and Lazenby encouraged him to continue. Besides, it was only Pierre's way—provoking Shon was the piquant sauce of his life.

"Lyin' awake I was," continued Shon, "in the middle of the night, not bein' able to sleep for a pain in a shoulder I'd strained, whin I heard a thing that drew me up standin'. It was the sound of a child laughin', so wonderful and bright, and at the very door of me tent

it seemed. Then it faded away till it was only a breath, lovely, and idle, and swingin'. I wint to the door and looked out. There was nothin' there, av coorse."

"And why 'av coorse'?" rejoined Pierre. The Chief Factor was intent on what Shon was saying, while Lazenby drummed his fingers on the table, his nose in the air.

"Divils me darlin', but ye know as well as I, that there's things in the world neither for havin' nor handlin'. And that's wan of thim, says I to meself. . . . I wint back and lay down, and I heard the voice singin' now and comin' nearer and nearer, and growin' louder and louder, and then there came with it a patter of feet, till it was as a thousand children were dancin' by me door. I was shy enough, I'll own; but I pulled aside the curtain of the tent to see again: and there was nothin' beyand for the eye. But the singin' was goin' past and recedin' as before, till it died away along the waves of prairie grass. I wint back and give Grey Nose, my Injin bed-fellow, a lift wid me fut. 'Come out of that,' says I, 'and tell me if dead or alive I am.' He got up, and there was the noise soft and grand again, but with it now the voices of men, the flip of birds' wings and the sighin' of tree tops, and behind all that the long wash of a sea like none I ever heard. . . . 'Well,' says I to the Injin grinnin' before me, 'what's that, in the name o' Moses?' 'That,' says he, laughin' slow in me face, 'is the Tall Master—him that brought you to the camp.' Thin I remimbered all the things that's been said of him, and I knew it was music I'd been hearin' and not children's voices nor anythin' else at all.

"'Come with me,' says Grey Nose; and he took me to the door of a big tent standin' alone from the rest.

'Wait a minute,' says he, and he put his hand on the tent curtain; and at that there was a crash, as a million gold hammers were fallin' on silver drums. And we both stood still; for it seemed an army, with swords wranglin' and bridle-chains rattlin', was marchin' down on us. There was the divil's own uproar, as a battle was comin' on; and a long line of spears clashed. But just then there whistled through the larrup of sound a clear voice callin', gentle and coaxin', yet commandin' too; and the spears dropped, and the pounding of horse-hoofs ceased, and then the army marched away; far away; iver so far away, into—"

"Into Heaven!" flippantly interjected Lazenby.

"Into Heaven, say I, and be choked to you! for there's no other place for it; and I'll stand by that, till I go there myself, and know the truth o' the thing."

Pierre here spoke. "Heaven gave you a fine trick with words, Shon McGann. I sometimes think Irishmen have gifts for only two things—words and women. . . . *Bien*, what then?"

Shon was determined not to be angered. The occasion was too big. "Well, Grey Nose lifted the curtain and wint in. In a minute he comes out. 'You can go in,' says he. So in I wint, the Injin not comin', and there in the middle of the tint stood the Tall Master, alone. He had his fiddle to his chin, and the bow hoverin' above it. He looked at me for a long time along the thing; then, all at once, from one string I heard the child laughin' that pleasant and distant, though the bow seemed not to be touchin'. Soon it thinned till it was the shadow of a laugh, and I didn't know whin it stopped, he smilin' down at the fiddle bewhiles. Then he said without lookin' at me,—'It is the spirit of the White Valley and the Hills of the Mighty Men; of which all

men shall know, for the North will come to her spring again one day soon, at the remaking of the world. They thought the song would never be found again, but I have given it a home here.' And he bent and kissed the strings. After, he turned sharply as if he'd been spoken to, and looked at someone beside him; someone that I couldn't see. A cloud dropped upon his face, he caught the fiddle hungrily to his breast, and came limpin' over to me—for there was somethin' wrong with his fut—and lookin' down his hook-nose at me, says he,—'I've a word for them at Fort Luke, where you're goin', and you'd better be gone at once; and I'll put you on your way. There's to be a great battle. The White Hands have an ancient feud with the Golden Dogs, and they have come from where the soft Chinook wind ranges the Peace River, to fight until no man of all the Golden Dogs be left, or till they themselves be destroyed. It is the same north and south,' he wint on; 'I have seen it all in Italy, in Greece, in—' but here he stopped and smiled strangely. After a minute he wint on: 'The White Hands have no quarrel with the Englishmen of the Fort, and I would warn them,—for Englishmen were once kind to me—and warn also the Golden Dogs. So come with me at once,' says he. And I did. And he walked with me till mornin', carryin' the fiddle under his arm, but wrapped in a beautiful velvet cloth, havin' on it grand figures like the arms of a king or queen. And just at the first whisk of sun he turned me into a trail and give me good-bye, sayin' that maybe he'd follow me soon, and, at any rate, he'd be there at the battle. Well, divils betide me! I got off the track again; and lost a day; but here I am; and there's me story to take or lave as you will."

Shon paused and began to fumble with the cards

on the table before him, looking the while at the others.

The Chief Factor was the first to speak. "I don't doubt but he told you true about the White Hands and the Golden Dogs," he said; "for there's been war and bad blood between them beyond the memory of man—at least since the time that the Mighty Men lived, from which these date their history. But there's nothing to be done to-night; for if we tell old Wind Driver, there'll be no sleeping at the Fort. So we'll let the thing stand."

"You believe all this poppy-cock, Chief?" said Lazenby to the Factor, but laughing in Shon's face the while.

The Factor gravely replied: "I knew of the Tall Master years ago on the Far-Off Metal River; and though I never saw him I can believe these things—and more. You do not know this world through and through, Lazenby; you have much to learn."

Pierre said nothing. He took the cards from Shon and passed them to and fro in his hand. Mechanically he dealt them out, and as mechanically they took them up and in silence began to play.

The next day there was commotion and excitement at Fort Luke. The Golden Dogs were making preparations for the battle. Pow-wow followed pow-wow, and paint and feathers followed all. The H. B. C. people had little to do but look to their guns and house everything within the walls of the Fort.

At night, Shon, Pierre, and Lazenby were seated about the table in the common-room, the cards lying dealt before them, waiting for the Factor to come. Presently the door opened and the Factor entered, followed by another. Shon and Pierre sprang to their feet.

"The Tall Master," said Shon with a kind of awe; and then stood still.

Their towering visitor slowly unloosed something he carried very carefully and closely beneath his arm, and laid it on the table, dropping his compass-like fingers softly on it. He bowed gravely to each, yet the bow seemed grotesque, his body was so ungainly. With the eyes of all drawn to him absolutely, he spoke in a low sonorous tone: "I have followed the traveller fast" —his hand lifted gently towards Shon—"for there are weighty concerns abroad, and I have things to say and do before I go again to my people—and beyond. . . . I have hungered for the face of a white man these many years, and his was the first I saw;"—again he tossed a long finger towards the Irishman—"and it brought back many things. I remember. . . ." He paused, then sat down; and they all did the same. He looked at them one by one with distant kindness. "I remember," he continued, and his strangely articulated fingers folded about the thing on the table beside him, "when"— here the cards caught his eye. His face underwent a change. An eager fantastic look shot from his eye,— "when I gambled this away at Lucca,"—his hand drew the bundle closer to him—"but I won it back again— at a price!" he gloomily added, glancing sideways as to someone at his elbow.

He remained, eyes hanging upon space for a moment, then he recollected himself and continued: "I became wiser; I never risked it again; but I loved the game always. I was a gamester from the start—the artist is always so when he is greatest,—like nature herself. And once, years after, I played with a mother for her child—and mine. And yet once again at Parma with" —here he paused, throwing that sharp sidelong glance—

"with *the greatest gamester,* for the infinite secret of Art: and I won it; but I paid the price! . . . I should like to play now."

He reached his hand, drew up five cards, and ran his eye through them. "Play!" he said. "The hand is good—very good. . . . Once when I played with the Princess—but it is no matter; and Tuscany is far away! . . . Play!" he repeated.

Pierre instantly picked up the cards, with an air of cool satisfaction. He had either found the perfect gamester or the perfect liar. He knew the remedy for either.

The Chief Factor did not move. Shon and Lazenby followed Pierre's action. By their positions Lazenby became his partner. They played in silence for a minute, the Tall Master taking all. "Napoleon was a wonderful player, but he lost with me," he said slowly as he played a card upon three others and took them.

Lazenby was so taken back by this remark that, presently, he trumped his partner's ace, and was rewarded by a talon-like look from the Tall Master's eye; but it was immediately followed by one of saturnine amusement.

They played on silently.

"Ah, you are a wonderful player!" he presently said to Pierre, with a look of keen scrutiny. "Come, I will play with you—for values—the first time in seventy-five years; then, no more!"

Lazenby and Shon drew away beside the Chief Factor. The two played. Meanwhile Lazenby said to Shon: "The man's mad. He talks about Napoleon as if he'd known him—as if it wasn't three-fourths of a century ago. Does he think we're all born idiots? Why, he's not over sixty years old now. But where the deuce

did he come from with that Italian face? And the funniest part of it is, he reminds me of someone. Did you notice how he limped—the awkward beggar!"

Lazenby had unconsciously lifted his voice, and presently the Tall Master turned and said to him: "I ran a nail into my foot at Leyden seventy-odd years ago."

"He's the devil himself," rejoined Lazenby, and he did not lower his voice.

"Many with angelic gifts are children of His Dark Majesty," said the Tall Master, slowly; and though he appeared closely occupied with the game, a look of vague sadness came into his face.

For a half-hour they played in silence, the slight, delicate-featured half-breed, and the mysterious man who had for so long been a thing of wonder in the North, a weird influence among the Indians.

There was a strange, cold fierceness in the Tall Master's face. He now staked his precious bundle against the one thing Pierre prized—the gold watch received years ago for a deed of heroism on the Chaudière. The half-breed had always spoken of it as amusing, but Shon at least knew that to Pierre it was worth his right hand.

Both men drew breath slowly, and their eyes were hard. The stillness became painful; all were possessed by the grim spirit of Chance. . . . The Tall Master won. He came to his feet, his shambling body drawn together to a height. Pierre rose also. Their looks clinched. Pierre stretched out his hand. "You are my master at this," he said.

The other smiled sadly. "I have played for the last time. I have not forgotten how to win. If I had lost, uncommon things had happened. This,"—he laid his hand on the bundle and gently undid it,—"is my oldest

friend, since the warm days at Parma . . . all dead . . . all dead." Out of the velvet wrapping, broidered with royal and ducal arms, and rounded by a wreath of violets—which the Chief Factor looked at closely—he drew his violin. He lifted it reverently to his lips.

"My good Garnerius!" he said. "Three masters played you, but I am chief of them all. They had the classic soul, but I the romantic heart—*les grandes caprices*." His head lifted higher. "I am the master artist of the world. I have found the core of Nature. Here in the North is the wonderful soul of things. Beyond this, far beyond, where the foolish think is only inviolate ice, is the first song of the Ages in a very pleasant land. I am the lost Master, and I shall return, I shall return . . . but not yet . . . not yet."

He fetched the instrument to his chin with a noble pride. The ugliness of his face was almost beautiful now.

The Chief Factor's look was fastened on him with bewilderment; he was trying to remember something: his mind went feeling, he knew not why, for a certain day, a quarter of a century before, when he unpacked a box of books and papers from England. Most of them were still in the Fort. The association of this man with these things fretted him.

The Tall Master swung his bow upward, but at that instant there came a knock, and, in response to a call, Wind Driver and Wine Face entered. Wine Face was certainly a beautiful girl; and Lazenby might well have been pardoned for throwing in his fate with such a heathen, if he despaired of ever seeing England again. The Tall Master did not turn towards these. The Indians sat gracefully on a bearskin before the fire. The eyes of the girl were cast shyly upon the Man as he stood

there unlike an ordinary man; in his face a fine hardness and the cold light of the North. He suddenly tipped his bow upward and brought it down with a most delicate crash upon the strings. Then softly, slowly, he passed into a weird fantasy. The Indians sat breathless. Upon them it acted more impressively than the others: besides, the player's eye was searching them now; he was playing into their very bodies. And they responded with some swift shocks of recognition crossing their faces. Suddenly the old Indian sprang up. He thrust his arms out, and made, as if unconsciously, some fantastic yet solemn motions. The player smiled in a far-off fashion, and presently ran the bow upon the strings in an exquisite cry; and then a beautiful avalanche of sound slid from a distance, growing nearer and nearer, till it swept through the room, and imbedded all in its sweetness.

At this the old Indian threw himself forward at the player's feet. "It is the song of the White Weaver, the maker of the world—the music from the Hills of the Mighty Men. . . . I knew it—I knew it—but never like that. . . . It was lost to the world; the wild cry of the lofty stars. . . ." His face was wet.

The girl too had risen. She came forward as if in a dream and reverently touched the arm of the musician, who paused now, and was looking at them from under his long eyelashes. She said whisperingly: "Are you a spirit? Do you come from the Hills of the Mighty Men?"

He answered gravely: "I am no spirit. But I have journeyed in the Hills of the Mighty Men and along their ancient hunting-grounds. This that I have played is the ancient music of the world—the music of Jubal and his comrades. It comes humming from the Poles;

it rides laughing down the planets; it trembles through the snow; it gives joy to the bones of the wind. . . . And I am the voice of it," he added; and he drew up his loose unmanageable body till it looked enormous, firm, and dominant.

The girl's fingers ran softly over to his breast. "I will follow you," she said, "when you go again to the Happy Valleys."

Down from his brow there swept a faint hue of colour, and, for a breath, his eyes closed tenderly with hers. But he straightway gathered back his look again, his body shrank, not rudely, from her fingers, and he absently said: "I am old—in years the father of the world. It is a man's life gone since, at Genoa, *she* laid her fingers on my breast like that. . . . These things can be no more . . . until the North hath its summer again; and I stand young—the Master—upon the summits of my renown."

The girl drew slowly back. Lazenby was muttering under his breath now; he was overwhelmed by this change in Wine Face. He had been impressed to awe by the Tall Master's music, but he was piqued, and determined not to give in easily. He said sneeringly that Maskelyne and Cooke in music had come to life, and suggested a snake-dance.

The Tall Master heard these things, and immediately he turned to Lazenby with an angry look on his face. His brows hung heavily over the dull fire of his eyes; his hair itself seemed like Medusa's, just quivering into savage life; the fingers spread out white and claw-like upon the strings as he curved his violin to his chin, whereof it became, as it were, a piece. The bow shot out and down upon the instrument with a great clangour. There eddied into a vast arena of sound the

prodigious elements of war. Torture rose from those four immeasurable chords; destruction was afoot upon them; a dreadful dance of death supervened.

Through the Chief Factor's mind there flashed—though mechanically, and only to be remembered afterwards—the words of a schoolday poem. It shuttled in and out of the music:

> "Wheel the wild dance,
> While lightnings glance,
> And thunders rattle loud;
> And call the brave to bloody grave,
> To sleep without a shroud."

The face of the player grew old and drawn. The skin was wrinkled, but shone, the hair spread white, the nose almost met the chin, the mouth was all malice. It was old age with vast power: conquest volleyed from the fingers.

Shon McGann whispered *aves*, aching with the sound; the Chief Factor shuddered to his feet; Lazenby winced and drew back to the wall, putting his hand before his face as though the sounds were striking him; the old Indian covered his head with his arms upon the floor. Wine Face knelt, her face all grey, her fingers lacing and interlacing with pain. Only Pierre sat with masterful stillness, his eyes never moving from the face of the player; his arms folded; his feet firmly wedded to the floor. The sound became strangely distressing. It shocked the flesh and angered the nerves. Upon Lazenby it acted singularly. He cowered from it, but presently, with a look of madness in his eyes, rushed forward, arms outstretched, as though to seize this intolerable minstrel. There was a sudden pause in the playing; then the room quaked with noise, buffeting

Lazenby into stillness. The sounds changed instantly again, and music of an engaging sweetness and delight fell about them as in silver drops—an enchanting lyric of love. Its exquisite tenderness subdued Lazenby, who, but now, had a heart for slaughter. He dropped on his knees, threw his head into his arms, and sobbed hard. The Tall Master's fingers crept caressingly along one of those heavenly veins of sound, his bow poising softly over it. The farthest star seemed singing.

At dawn the next day the Golden Dogs were gathered for war before the Fort. Immediately after the sun rose, the foe were seen gliding darkly out of the horizon. From another direction came two travellers. These also saw the White Hands bearing upon the Fort, and hurried forward. They reached the gates of the Fort in good time, and were welcomed. One was a chief trader from a fort in the west. He was an old man, and had been many years in the service of the H. B. C.; and, like Lazenby, had spent his early days in London, a *connoisseur* in all its pleasures; the other was a *voyageur*. They had posted on quickly to bring news of this crusade of the White Hands.

The hostile Indians came steadily to within a few hundred yards of the Golden Dogs. Then they sent a brave to say that they had no quarrel with the people of the Fort; and that if the Golden Dogs came on they would battle with them alone; since the time had come for "one to be as both," as their Medicine Men had declared since the days of the Great Race. And this signified that one should destroy the other.

At this all the Golden Dogs ranged into line. The sun shone brightly, the long hedge of pine woods in the

distance caught the colour of the sky, the flowers of the plains showed handsomely as a carpet of war. The bodies of the fighters glistened. You could see the rise and fall of their bare, strenuous chests. They stood as their forefathers in battle, almost naked, with crested head, gleaming axe, scalp-knife, and bows and arrows. At first there was the threatening rustle of preparation; then a great stillness came and stayed for a moment; after which, all at once, there sped through the air a big shout of battle, and the innumerable *twang* of flying arrows; and the opposing hosts ran upon each other.

Pierre and Shon McGann, watching from the Fort, cried out with excitement.

"Divils me darlin'!" called Shon, "are we gluin' our eyes to a chink in the wall, whin the tangle of battle goes on beyand? Bedad, I'll not stand it! Look at them twistin' the neck o' war! Open the gates, open the gates say I, and let us have play with our guns."

"Hush! *Mon Dieu!*" interrupted Pierre. "Look! The Tall Master!"

None at the Fort had seen the Tall Master since the night before. Now he was covering the space between the walls and the battle, his hair streaming behind him.

When he came near to the vortex of fight he raised his violin to his chin, and instantly a piercingly sweet call penetrated the wild uproar. The Call filled it, drained through it, wrapped it, overcame it; so that it sank away at last like the outwash of an exhausted tide: the weft of battle stayed unfinished in the loom.

Then from the Indian lodges came the women and children. They drew near to the unearthly luxury of that Call, now lifting with an unbounded joy. Battle-axes fell to the ground; the warriors quieted even where

they stood locked with their foes. The Tall Master now drew away from them, facing the north and west. That ineffable Call drew them after him with grave joy; and they brought their dead and wounded along. The women and children glided in among the men and followed also. Presently one girl ran away from the rest and came close into the great leader's footsteps.

At that instant, Lazenby, from the wall of the Fort, cried out madly, sprang down, opened the gates, and rushed towards the girl, crying: "Wine Face! Wine Face!"

She did not look behind. But he came close to her and caught her by the waist. "Come back! Come back! O my love, come back!" he urged; but she pushed him gently from her.

"Hush! Hush!" she said. "We are going to the Happy Valleys. Don't you hear him calling?" . . . And Lazenby fell back.

The Tall Master was now playing a wonderful thing, half dance, half carnival; but with that Call still beating through it. They were passing the Fort at an angle. All within issued forth to see. Suddenly the old trader who had come that morning started forward with a cry; then stood still. He caught the Factor's arm; but he seemed unable to speak yet; his face was troubled, his eyes were hard upon the player.

The procession passed the empty lodges, leaving the ground strewn with their weapons, and not one of their number stayed behind. They passed away towards the high hills of the north-west—beautiful austere barriers.

Still the trader gazed, and was pale, and trembled. They watched long. The throng of pilgrims grew a vague mass; no longer an army of individuals; and the

music came floating back with distant charm. At last the old man found voice. "My God, it is—"

The Factor touched his arm, interrupting him, and drew a picture from his pocket—one but just now taken from that musty pile of books, received so many years before. He showed it to the old man.

"Yes, yes," said the other, "that is he. . . . And the world buried him forty years ago!"

Pierre, standing near, added with soft irony: "There are strange things in the world. He is the gamester of the world. *Mais* a grand comrade also."

The music came waving back upon them delicately but the pilgrims were fading from view.

Soon the watchers were alone with the glowing day.

THE CRIMSON FLAG

THE CRIMSON FLAG

Talk and think as one would, The Woman was striking to see; with marvellous flaxen hair and a joyous violet eye. She was all pulse and dash; but she was as much less beautiful than the manager's wife as Tom Liffey was as nothing beside the manager himself; and one would care little to name the two women in the same breath if the end had been different. When The Woman came to Little Goshen there were others of her class there, but they were of a commoner sort and degree. She was the queen of a lawless court, though she never, from first to last, spoke to one of those others who were her people; neither did she hold commerce with any of the ordinary miners, save Pretty Pierre,—but he was more gambler than miner,—and he went, when the matter was all over, and told her some things that stripped her soul naked before her eyes. Pierre had a wonderful tongue. It was only the gentlemen-diggers —and there were many of them at Little Goshen—who called upon her when the lights were low; and then there was a good deal of muffled mirth in the white house among the pines. The rougher miners made no quarrel with this, for the gentlemen-diggers were popular enough, they were merely sarcastic and humorous, and said things which, coming to The Woman's ears, made her very merry; for she herself had an abundant wit, and had spent wild hours with clever men. She did not resent the playful insolence that sent a dozen miners to her house in the dead of night with a crimson flag,

which they quietly screwed to her roof; and paint, with which they deftly put a wide stripe of scarlet round the cornice, and another round the basement. In the morning, when she saw what had been done, she would not have the paint removed nor the flag taken down; for, she said, the stripes looked very well, and the other would show that she was always at home.

Now, the notable thing was that Heldon, the manager, was in The Woman's house on the night this was done. Tom Liffey, the lumpish guide and trapper, saw him go in; and, days afterwards, he said to Pierre: "Divils me own, but this is a bad hour for Heldon's wife—she with a face like a princess and eyes like the fear o' God. Nivir a wan did I see like her, since I came out of Erin with a clatter of hoofs behoind me and a squall on the sea before. There's wimmin there wid cheeks like roses and buthermilk, and a touch that'd make y'r heart pound on y'r ribs; but none that's grander than Heldon's wife. To lave her for that other, standin' hip-high in her shame, is temptin' the fires of Heaven, that basted the sinners o' Sodom."

Pierre, pausing between the whiffs of a cigarette, said: "So? But you know more of catching foxes in winter, and climbing mountains in summer, and the grip of the arm of an Injin girl, than of these things. You are young, quite young in the world, Tom Liffey."

"Young I may be with a glint o' grey at me temples from a night o' trouble beyand in the hills; but I'm the man, an' the only man, that's climbed to the glacier-top—God's Playground, as they call it: and nivir a dirty trick have I done to Injin girl or any other; and be damned to you there!"

"Sometimes I think you are as foolish as Shon McGann," compassionately replied the half-breed.

"You have almighty virtue, and you did that brave trick of the glacier; but great men have fallen. You are not dead yet. Still, as you say, Heldon's wife is noble to see. She is grave and cold, and speaks little; but there is something in her which is not of the meek of the earth. Some women say nothing, and suffer and forgive, and take such as Heldon back to their bosoms; but there are others—I remember a woman—*bien*, it is no matter, it was long ago; but they two are as if born of one mother; and what comes of this will be mad play—mad play."

"Av coorse his wife may not get to know of it, and—"

"Not get to know it! 'Tsh, you are a child—"

"Faith, I'll say what I think, and that in y'r face! Maybe he'll tire of the handsome rip—for handsome she is, like a yellow lily growin' out o' mud—and go back to his lawful wife, that believes he's at the mines, when he's drinkin' and colloguin' wid a fly-away."

Pierre slowly wheeled till he had the Irishman straight in his eye. Then he said in a low, cutting tone: "I suppose your heart aches for the beautiful lady, eh?" Here he screwed his slight forefinger into Tom's breast; then he added sharply: "*Nom de Dieu*, but you make me angry! You talk too much. Such men get into trouble. And keep down the riot of that heart of yours, Tom Liffey, or you'll walk on the edge of knives one day. And now take an inch of whisky and ease the anxious soul. *Voilà!*" After a moment he added: "Women work these things out for themselves."

Then the two left the hut, and amiably strolled together to the centre of the village, where they parted.

It was as Pierre had said: the woman would work the thing out for herself. Later that evening Heldon's

wife stood cloaked and veiled in the shadows of the pines, facing the house with The Crimson Flag. Her eyes shifted ever from the door to the flag, which was stirred by the light breeze. Once or twice she shivered as with cold, but she instantly stilled again, and watched. It was midnight. Here and there beyond in the village a light showed, and straggling voices floated faintly towards her. For a long time no sound came from the house. But at last she heard a laugh. At that she drew something from her pocket, and held it firmly in her hand. Once she turned and looked at another house far up on the hill, where lights were burning. It was Heldon's house—her home. A sharp sound as of anguish and anger escaped her; then she fastened her eyes on the door in front of her.

At that moment Tom Liffey was standing with his hands on his hips looking at Heldon's home on the hill; and he said some rumbling words, then strode on down the road, and suddenly paused near the wife. He did not see her. He faced the door at which she was looking, and shook his fist at it.

"A murrain on y'r sowl!" said he, "as there's plague in y'r body, and hell in the slide of y'r feet, like the trail of the red spider. And out o' that come ye, Heldon, for I know y're there. Out of that, ye beast! . . . But how can ye go back—you that's rolled in *that* sewer—to the loveliest woman that ever trod the neck o' the world! Damned y' are in every joint o' y'r frame, and damned is y'r sowl, I say, for bringing sorrow to her; and I hate you as much for that, as I could worship her was she not your wife and a lady o' blood, God save her!"

Then shaking his fist once more, he swung away slowly down the road. During this the wife's teeth

held together as though they were of a piece. She looked after Tom Liffey and smiled; but it was a dreadful smile.

"He worships me, that common man—worships me," she said. "This man who was my husband has shamed me, left me. Well—"

The door of the house opened; a man came out. His wife leaned a little forward, and something clicked ominously in her hand. But a voice came up the road towards them through the clear air—the voice of Tom Liffey. The husband paused to listen; the wife mechanically did the same. The husband remembered this afterwards: it was the key to, and the beginning of, a tragedy. These are the words the Irishman sang:

> "She was a queen, she stood up there before me,
> My blood went roarin' when she touched my hand;
> She kissed me on the lips, and then she swore me
> To die for her—and happy was the land."

A new and singular look came into her face. It transformed her. "That," she said in a whisper to herself—"that! He knows the way."

As her husband turned towards his home, she turned also. He heard the rustle of garments, and he could just discern the cloaked figure in the shadows. He hurried on; the figure flitted ahead of him. A fear possessed him in spite of his will. He turned back. The figure stood still for a moment, then followed him. He braced himself, faced about, and walked towards it: it stopped and waited. He had not the courage. He went back again swiftly towards the house he had left. Again he looked behind him. The figure was standing, not far, in the pines. He wheeled suddenly towards the house, turned a key in the door, and entered.

Then the wife went to that which had been her home: Heldon did not go thither until the first flush of morning. Pierre, returning from an all-night sitting at cards, met him, and saw the careworn look on his face. The half-breed smiled. He knew that the event was doubling on the man. When Heldon reached his house, he went to his wife's room. It was locked. Then he walked down to his mines with a miserable shame and anger at his heart. He did not pass The Crimson Flag. He went by another way

That evening, in the dusk, a woman knocked at Tom Liffey's door. He opened it.

"Are you alone?" she said.

"I am alone, lady."

"I will come in," she added.

"You will—come in?" he faltered.

She drew near him, and reached out and gently caught his hand.

"Ah!" he said, with a sound almost like a sob in its intensity, and the blood flushed to his hair.

He stepped aside, and she entered. In the light of the candle her eye burned into his, but her face wore a shining coldness. She leaned towards him.

"You said you could worship me," she whispered, "and you cursed *him*. Well—worship me—altogether—and that will curse him, as he has killed me."

"Dear lady!" he said, in an awed, overwhelmed murmur; and he fell back to the wall.

She came towards him. "Am I not beautiful?" she urged. She took his hand. His eye swam with hers. But his look was different from hers, though he could not know that. His was the madness of a man in a dream; hers was a painful thing. The Furies dwelt

in her. She softly lifted his hand above his head, and whispered: "Swear." And she kissed him. Her lips were icy, though he did not think so. The blood tossed in his veins. He swore: but, doing so, he could not conceive *all* that would be required of him. He was hers, body and soul, and she had resolved on a grim thing. . . . In the darkness, they left the hut and passed into the woods, and slowly up through the hills.

Heldon returned to his home that night to find it empty. There were no servants. There was no wife. Her cat and dog lay dead upon the hearthrug. Her clothing was cut into strips. Her wedding-dress was a charred heap on the fireplace. Her jewellery lay molten with it. Her portrait had been torn from its frame.

An intolerable fear possessed him. Drops of sweat hung on his forehead and his hands. He fled towards the town. He bit his finger-nails till they bled as he passed the house in the pines. He lifted his arm as if the flappings of The Crimson Flag were blows in his face.

At last he passed Tom Liffey's hut. He saw Pierre coming from it. The look on the gambler's face was one of gloomy wonder. His fingers trembled as he lighted a cigarette, and that was an unusual thing. The form of Heldon edged within the light. Pierre dropped the match and said to him,—"You are looking for your wife?"

Heldon bowed his head. The other threw open the door of the hut. "Come in here," he said. They entered. Pierre pointed to a woman's hat on the table. "Do you know that?" he asked, huskily, for he was moved. But Heldon only nodded dazedly.

Pierre continued: "I was to have met Tom Liffey

here to-night. He is not here. You hoped—I suppose —to see your wife in your—home. She is not there. He left a word on paper for me. I have torn it up. Writing is the enemy of man. But I know where he is gone. I know also where your wife has gone."

Heldon's face was of a hateful paleness. . . . They passed out into the night.

"Where are you going?" Heldon said.

"To God's Playground, if we can get there."

"To God's Playground? To the glacier-top? You are mad."

"No, but *he* and *she* were mad. Come on." Then he whispered something, and Heldon gave a great cry, and they plunged into the woods.

In the morning the people of Little Goshen, looking towards the glacier, saw a flag (they knew afterwards that it was crimson) flying on it. Near it were two human figures. A miner, looking through a field-glass, said that one figure was crouching by the flag-staff, and that it was a woman. The other figure near was a man. As the morning wore on, they saw upon a crag of ice below the sloping glacier two men looking upwards towards the flag. One of them seemed to shriek out, and threw up his hands, and made as if to rush forward; but the other drew him back.

Heldon knew what revenge and disgrace may be at their worst. In vain he tried to reach God's Playground. Only one man knew the way, and he was dead upon it—with Heldon's wife: two shameless suicides. . . . When he came down from the mountain the hair upon his face was white, though that upon his head remained black as it had always been. And those frozen figures stayed there like statues with that other crimson flag: until, one day, a great-bodied wind swept out of the

north, and, in pity, carried them down a bottomless fissure.

But long before this happened, The Woman had fled from Little Goshen in the night, and her house was burned to the ground.

THE FLOOD

THE FLOOD

WENDLING came to Fort Anne on the day that the Reverend Ezra Badgley and an unknown girl were buried. And that was a notable thing. The man had been found dead at his evening meal; the girl had died on the same day; and they were buried side by side. This caused much scandal, for the man was holy, and the girl, as many women said, was probably evil altogether. At the graves, when the minister's people saw what was being done, they piously protested; but the Factor, to whom Pierre had whispered a word, answered them gravely that the matter should go on: since none knew but the woman was as worthy of heaven as the man. Wendling chanced to stand beside Pretty Pierre.

"Who knows!" he said aloud, looking hard at the graves, "who knows! . . . She died before him, but the dead can strike."

Pierre did not answer immediately, for the Factor was calling the earth down on both coffins; but after a moment he added: "Yes, the dead can strike." And then the eyes of the two men caught and stayed, and they knew that they had things to say to each other in the world.

They became friends. And that, perhaps, was not greatly to Wendling's credit; for in the eyes of many Pierre was an outcast as an outlaw. Maybe some of the women disliked this friendship most; since Wendling was a handsome man, and Pierre was never known to seek them, good or bad; and they blamed him for the other's coldness, for his unconcerned yet respectful eye.

"There's Nelly Nolan would dance after him to the world's end," said Shon McGann to Pierre one day; "and the Widdy Jerome herself, wid her flamin' cheeks and the wild fun in her eye, croons like a babe at the breast as he slides out his cash on the bar; and over on Gansonby's Flat there's—"

"There's many a fool, *voilà*," sharply interjected Pierre, as he pushed the needle through a button he was sewing on his coat.

"Bedad, there's a pair of fools here, anyway, I say; for the women might die without lift at waist or brush of lip, and neither of ye'd say, 'Here's to the joy of us, goddess, me own!'"

Pierre seemed to be intently watching the needle-point as it pierced up the button-eye, and his reply was given with a slowness corresponding to the sedate passage of the needle. "Wendling, you think, cares nothing for women? Well, men who are like that cared once for one woman, and when that was over— But, pshaw! I will not talk. You are no thinker, Shon McGann. You blunder through the world. And you'll tremble as much to a woman's thumb in fifty years as now."

"By the holy smoke," said Shon, "though I tremble at that, maybe, I'll not tremble, as Wendling, at nothing at all." Here Pierre looked up sharply, then dropped his eyes on his work again. Shon lapsed suddenly into a moodiness.

"Yes," said Pierre, "as Wendling, at nothing at all? Well?"

"Well, this, Pierre, for you that's a thinker from me that's none. I was walking with him in Red Glen yesterday. Sudden he took to shiverin', and snatched me by the arm, and a mad look shot out of his hand-

some face. 'Hush!' says he. I listened. There was a sound like the hard rattle of a creek over stones, and then another sound behind that. 'Come quick,' says he, the sweat standin' thick on him; and he ran me up the bank—for it was at the beginnin' of the Glen where the sides were low—and there we stood pantin' and starin' flat at each other. 'What's that? and what's got its hand on ye? for y' are cold as death, an' pinched in the face, an' you've bruised my arm,' said I. And he looked round him slow and breathed hard, then drew his fingers through the sweat on his cheek. 'I'm not well, and I thought I heard—you heard it; what was it like?' said he; and he peered close at me. 'Like water,' said I; 'a little creek near, and a flood comin' far off.' 'Yes, just that,' said he; 'it's some trick of wind in the place, but it makes a man foolish, and an inch of brandy would be the right thing.' I didn't say no to that. And on we came, and brandy we had with a wish in the eye of Nelly Nolan that'd warm the heart of a tomb. . . . And there's a cud for your chewin', Pierre. Think that by the neck and the tail, and the divil absolve ye."

During this, Pierre had finished with the button. He had drawn on his coat and lifted his hat, and now lounged, trying the point of the needle with his forefinger. When Shon ended, he said with a sidelong glance: "But what did *you* think of all that, Shon?"

"Think! There it was! What's the use of thinkin'? There's many a trick in the world with wind or with spirit, as I've seen often enough in ould Ireland, and it's not to be guessed by me." Here his voice got a little lower and a trifle solemn. "For, Pierre," spoke he, "there's what's more than life or death, and sorra wan can we tell what it is; but we'll know some day whin—"

"When we've taken the leap at the Almighty Ditch," said Pierre, with a grave kind of lightness. "Yes, it is all strange. But even the Almighty Ditch is worth the doing: nearly everything is worth the doing; being young, growing old, fighting, loving—when youth is on —hating, eating, drinking, working, playing big games. All is worth it except two things."

"And what are they, bedad?"

"Thy neighbour's wife and murder. Those are horrible. They double on a man one time or another; always."

Here, as in curiosity, Pierre pierced his finger with the needle, and watched the blood form in a little globule. Looking at it meditatively and sardonically, he said: "There is only one end to these. Blood for blood is a great matter; and I used to wonder if it would not be terrible for a man to see his death coming on him drop by drop, like that." He let the spot of blood fall to the floor. "But now I know that there is a punishment worse than that . . . *mon Dieu!* worse than that," he added.

Into Shon's face a strange look had suddenly come. "Yes, there's something worse than that, Pierre."

"So, *bien?*"

Shon made the sacred gesture of his creed. "To be punished by the dead. And not see them—only hear them." And his eyes steadied firmly to the other's.

Pierre was about to reply, but there came the sound of footsteps through the open door, and presently Wendling entered slowly. He was pale and worn, and his eyes looked out with a searching anxiousness. But that did not render him less comely. He had always dressed in black and white, and this now added to the easy and yet severe refinement of his person. His birth and

breeding had occurred in places unfrequented by such as Shon and Pierre; but plains and wild life level all; and men are friends according to their taste and will, and by no other law. Hence these with Wendling. He stretched out his hand to each without a word. The hand-shake was unusual; he had little demonstration ever. Shon looked up surprised, but responded. Pierre followed with a swift, inquiring look; then, in the succeeding pause, he offered cigarettes. Wendling took one; and all, silent, sat down. The sun streamed intemperately through the doorway, making a broad ribbon of light straight across the floor to Wendling's feet. After lighting his cigarette, he looked into the sunlight for a moment, still not speaking. Shon meanwhile had started his pipe, and now, as if he found the silence awkward,—"It's a day for God's country, this," he said: "to make man a Christian for little or much, though he play with the Divil betunewhiles." Without looking at them, Wendling said, in a low voice: "It was just such a day, down there in Quebec, when It happened. You could hear the swill of the river, the water licking the piers, and the saws in the Big Mill and the Little Mill as they marched through the timber, flashing their teeth like bayonets. It's a wonderful sound on a hot, clear day—that wild, keen singing of the saws, like the cry of a live thing fighting and conquering. Up from the fresh-cut lumber in the yards there came a smell like the juice of apples, and the sawdust, as you thrust your hand into it, was as cool and soft as the leaves of a clove-flower in the dew. On these days the town was always still. It looked sleeping, and you saw the heat quivering up from the wooden walls and the roofs of cedar shingles as though the houses were breathing."

Here he paused, still intent on the shaking sunshine. Then he turned to the others as if suddenly aware that he had been talking to them. Shon was about to speak, but Pierre threw a restraining glance, and, instead, they all looked through the doorway and beyond. In the settlement below they saw the effect that Wendling had described. The houses breathed. A grasshopper went clacking past, a dog at the door snapped up a fly; but there seemed no other life of day. Wendling nodded his head towards the distance. "It was quiet, like that. I stood and watched the mills and the yards, and listened to the saws, and looked at the great slide, and the logs on the river: and I said ever to myself that it was all mine—all. Then I turned to a big house on the hillock beyond the cedars, whose windows were open, with a cool dusk lying behind them. More than all else, I loved to think I owned that house and what was in it. . . . She was a beautiful woman. And she used to sit in a room facing the mill—though the house fronted another way—thinking of me, I did not doubt, and working at some delicate needle-stuff. There never had been a sharp word between us, save when I quarrelled bitterly with her brother, and he left the mill and went away. But she got over that mostly, though the lad's name was never mentioned between us. That day I was so hungry for the sight of her that I got my field-glass—used to watch my vessels and rafts making across the bay—and trained it on the window where I knew she sat. I thought it would amuse her, too, when I went back at night, if I told her what she had been doing. I laughed to myself at the thought of it as I adjusted the glass. . . . I looked. . . . There was no more laughing. . . . I saw her, and in front of her a man, with his back half on me. I could not recognise him, though at the instant I

thought he was something familiar. I failed to get his face at all. Hers I found indistinctly. But I saw him catch her playfully by the chin! After a little they rose. He put his arm about her and kissed her, and he ran his fingers through her hair. She had such fine golden hair—so light, and it lifted to every breath. Something got into my brain. I know now it was the maggot which sent Othello mad. The world in that hour was malicious, awful. . . .

"After a time—it seemed ages, she and everything had receded so far—I went . . . home. At the door I asked the servant who had been there. She hesitated, confused, and then said the young curate of the parish. I was very cool: for madness is a strange thing; you see everything with an intense aching clearness—that is the trouble. . . . She was more kind than common. I do not think I was unusual. I was playing a part well, my grandmother had Indian blood like yours, Pierre,—and I was waiting. I was even nicely critical of her to myself. I balanced the mole on her neck against her general beauty; the curve of her instep, I decided, was a little too emphatic. I passed her backwards and forwards, weighing her at every point; but yet these two things were the only imperfections. I pronounced her an exceeding piece of art—and infamy. I was much interested to see how she could appear perfect in her soul. I encouraged her to talk. I saw with devilish irony that an angel spoke. And, to cap it all, she assumed the fascinating air of the mediator—for her brother; seeking a reconciliation between us. Her amazing art of person and mind so worked upon me that it became unendurable; it was so exquisite—and so shameless. I was sitting where the priest had sat that afternoon; and when she leaned towards me I caught

her chin lightly and trailed my fingers through her hair as he had done: and that ended it, for I was cold, and my heart worked with horrible slowness. Just as a wave poises at its height before breaking upon the shore, it hung at every pulse-beat, and then seemed to fall over with a sickening thud. I arose, and acting still, spoke impatiently of her brother. Tears sprang to her eyes. Such divine dissimulation, I thought—too good for earth. She turned to leave the room, and I did not stay her. Yet we were together again that night. . . . I was only waiting."

The cigarette had dropped from his fingers to the floor, and lay there smoking. Shon's face was fixed with anxiety; Pierre's eyes played gravely with the sunshine. Wendling drew a heavy breath, and then went on.

"Again, next day, it was like this—the world draining the heat. . . . I watched from the Big Mill. I saw them again. He leaned over her chair and buried his face in her hair. The proof was absolute now. . . . I started away, going a roundabout, that I might not be seen. It took me some time. I was passing through a clump of cedar when I saw them making towards the trees skirting the river. Their backs were on me. Suddenly they diverted their steps towards the great slide, shut off from water this last few months, and used as a quarry to deepen it. Some petrified things had been found in the rocks, but I did not think they were going to these. I saw them climb down the rocky steps; and presently they were lost to view. The gates of the slide could be opened by machinery from the Little Mill. A terrible, deliciously malignant thought came to me. I remember how the sunlight crept away from me and left me in the dark. I stole through that

darkness to the Little Mill. I went to the machinery for opening the gates. Very gently I set it in motion, facing the slide as I did so. I could see it through the open sides of the mill. I smiled to think what the tiny creek, always creeping through a faint leak in the gates and falling with a granite rattle on the stones, would now become. I pushed the lever harder—harder. I saw the gates suddenly give, then fly open, and the river sprang roaring massively through them. I heard a shriek through the roar. I shuddered; and a horrible sickness came on me. . . . And as I turned from the machinery, I saw the young priest coming at me through a doorway! . . . It was not the priest and my wife that I had killed; but my wife and her brother. . . ."

He threw his head back as though something clamped his throat. His voice roughened with misery. "The young priest buried them both, and people did not know the truth. They were even sorry for me. But I gave up the mills—all; and I became homeless . . . this."

Now he looked up at the two men, and said: "I have told you because you know something, and because there will, I think, be an end soon." He got up and reached out a trembling hand for a cigarette. Pierre gave him one. "Will you walk with me?" he asked.

Shon shook his head. "God forgive you," he replied, "I can't do it."

But Wendling and Pierre left the hut together. They walked for an hour, scarcely speaking, and not considering where they went. At last Pierre mechanically turned to go down into Red Glen. Wendling stopped short, then, with a sighing laugh, strode on. "Shon has told you what happened here?" he said.

Pierre nodded.

"And you know what came once when you walked with me. . . . The dead can strike," he added.

Pierre sought his eye. "The minister and the girl buried together that day," he said, "were—"

He stopped, for behind him he heard the sharp, cold trickle of water. Silent they walked on. It followed them. They could not get out of the Glen now until they had compassed its length—the walls were high. The sound grew. The men faced each other.

"Good-bye," said Wendling; and he reached out his hand swiftly. But Pierre heard a mighty flood groaning on them, and he blinded as he stretched his arm in response. He caught at Wendling's shoulder, but felt him lifted and carried away, while he himself stood still in a screeching wind and heard impalpable water rushing over him. In a minute it was gone; and he stood alone in Red Glen.

He gathered himself up and ran. Far down, where the Glen opened to the plain, he found Wendling. The hands were wrinkled; the face was cold; the body was wet: the man was drowned and dead.

IN PIPI VALLEY

IN PIPI VALLEY

"Divils me darlins, it's a memory I have of a time whin luck wasn't foldin' her arms round me, and not so far back aither, and I on the wallaby track hot-foot for the City o' Gold."

Shon McGann said this in the course of a discussion on the prosperity of Pipi Valley. Pretty Pierre remarked nonchalantly in reply,—"The wallaby track —eh—what is that, Shon?"

"It's a bit of a haythen y' are, Pierre. The wallaby track? That's the name in Australia for trampin' west through the plains of the Never Never Country lookin' for the luck o' the world; as, bedad, it's meself that knows it, and no other, and not by book or tellin' either, but with the grip of thirst at me throat and a reef in me belt every hour to quiet the gnawin'." And Shon proceeded to light his pipe afresh.

"But the City o' Gold—was there much wealth for you there, Shon?"

Shon laughed, and said between the puffs of smoke,—"Wealth for me, is it? Oh, mother o' Moses! wealth of work and the pride of livin' in the heart of us, and the grip of an honest hand betunewhiles; and what more do y' want, Pierre?"

The Frenchman's drooping eyelids closed a little more, and he replied, meditatively: "Money? No, that is not Shon McGann. The good fellowship of thirst?—yes, a little. The grip of the honest hand, quite, and the clinch of an honest waist? Well, *peut-être*.

Of the waist which is not honest?—tsh! he is gay—and so!"

The Irishman took his pipe from his mouth, and held it poised before him. He looked inquiringly and a little frowningly at the other for a moment, as if doubtful whether to resent the sneer that accompanied the words just spoken; but at last he good-humouredly said: "Blood o' me bones, but it's much I fear the honest waist hasn't always been me portion—Heaven forgive me!"

"*Nom de pipe*, this Irishman!" replied Pierre. "He is gay; of good heart; he smiles, and the women are at his heels; he laughs, and they are on their knees—Such a fool he is!"

Still Shon McGann laughed.

"A fool I am, Pierre, or I'd be in ould Ireland at this minute, with a roof o' me own over me and the friends o' me youth round me, and brats on me knee, and the fear o' God in me heart."

"*Mais*, Shon," mockingly rejoined the Frenchman, "this is not Ireland, but there is much like that to be done here. There is a roof, and there is that woman at Ward's Mistake, and the brats—eh, by and by?"

Shon's face clouded. He hesitated, then replied sharply: "*That* woman, do y' say, Pierre, she that nursed me when the Honourable and meself were taken out o' Sandy Drift, more dead than livin'; she that brought me back to life as good as ever, barrin' this scar on me forehead and a stiffness at me elbow, and the Honourable as right as the sun, more luck to him! —which he doesn't need at all, with the wind of fortune in his back and shiftin' neither to right nor left. —*That* woman! faith, y'd better not cut the words so sharp betune yer teeth, Pierre."

"But I will say more—a little—just the same. She nursed you—well, that is good; but it is good also, I think, you pay her for that, and stop the rest. Women are fools, or else they are worse. This one? She is worse. Yes; you will take my advice, Shon McGann."

The Irishman came to his feet with a spring, and his words were angry.

"It doesn't come well from Pretty Pierre, the gambler, to be revilin' a woman; and I throw it in y'r face, though I've slept under the same blanket with ye, an' drunk out of the same cup on manny a tramp, that you lie dirty and black when ye spake ill—of my wife."

This conversation had occurred in a quiet corner of the bar-room of the Saints' Repose. The first few sentences had not been heard by the others present; but Shon's last speech, delivered in a ringing tone, drew the miners to their feet, in expectation of seeing shots exchanged at once. The code required satisfaction, immediate and decisive. Shon was not armed, and some one thrust a pistol towards him; but he did not take it. Pierre rose, and coming slowly to him, laid a slender finger on his chest, and said:

"So! I did not know that she was *your* wife. That is a surprise."

The miners nodded assent. He continued:

"Lucy Rives your wife! *Hola*, Shon McGann, that is such a joke."

"It's no joke, but God's truth, and the lie is with you, Pierre."

Murmurs of anticipation ran round the room; but the half-breed said: "There will be satisfaction altogether; but it is my whim to prove what I say first; then"—fondling his revolver—"then we shall settle. But, see: you will meet me here at ten o'clock to-night,

and I will make it, I swear to you, so clear, that the woman is vile."

The Irishman suddenly clutched the gambler, shook him like a dog, and threw him against the farther wall. Pierre's pistol was levelled from the instant Shon moved; but he did not use it. He rose on one knee after the violent fall, and pointing it at the other's head, said coolly: "I could kill you, my friend, so easy! But it is not my whim. Till ten o'clock is not long to wait, and then, just here, one of us shall die. Is it not so?"

The Irishman did not flinch before the pistol. He said with low fierceness, "At ten o'clock, or now, or any time, or at any place, y'll find me ready to break the back of the lies y've spoken, or be broken meself. Lucy Rives is my wife, and she's true and straight as the sun in the sky. I'll be here at ten o'clock, and as ye say, Pierre, one of us makes the long reckoning for this." And he opened the door and went out.

The half-breed moved to the bar, and, throwing down a handful of silver, said: "It is good we drink after so much heat. Come on, come on, comrades."

The miners responded to the invitation. Their sympathy was mostly with Shon McGann; their admiration was about equally divided; for Pretty Pierre had the quality of courage in as active a degree as the Irishman, and they knew that some extraordinary motive, promising greater excitement, was behind the Frenchman's refusal to send a bullet through Shon's head a moment before.

King Kinkley, the best shot in the Valley next to Pierre, had watched the unusual development of the incident with interest; and when his glass had been filled he said, thoughtfully: "This thing isn't according to Hoyle. There's never been any trouble just like it in

the Valley before. What's that McGann said about the lady being his wife? If it's the case, where hev we been in the show? Where was we when the license was around? It isn't good citizenship, and I hev my doubts."

Another miner, known as the Presbyterian, added: "There's some skulduggery in it, I guess. The lady has had as much protection as if she was the sister of every citizen of the place, just as much as Lady Jane here (Lady Jane, the daughter of the proprietor of the Saints' Repose, administered drinks), and she's played this stacked hand on us, has gone one better on the sly."

"Pierre," said King Kinkley, "you're on the track of the secret, and appear to hev the advantage of the lady: blaze it—blaze it out."

Pierre rejoined, "I know something; but it is good we wait until ten o'clock. Then I will show you all the cards in the pack. Yes, so, *bien sur*."

And though there was some grumbling, Pierre had his way. The spirit of adventure and mutual interest had thrown the French half-breed, the Irishman, and the Hon. Just Trafford together on the cold side of the Canadian Rockies; and they had journeyed to this other side, where the warm breath from the Pacific passed to its congealing in the ranges. They had come to the Pipi field when it was languishing. From the moment of their coming its luck changed; it became prosperous. They conquered the Valley each after his kind. The Honourable—he was always called that—mastered its resources by a series of "great lucks," as Pierre termed it, had achieved a fortune, and made no enemies; and but two months before the day whose incidents are here recorded, had gone to the coast on business. Shon had won the reputation of being a

"white man," to say nothing of his victories in the region of gallantry. He made no wealth; he only got that he might spend. Irishman-like he would barter the chances of fortune for the lilt of a voice or the clatter of a pretty foot.

Pierre was different. "Women, ah, no!" he would say, "they make men fools or devils."

His temptation lay not that way. When the three first came to the Pipi, Pierre was a miner, simply; but nearly all his life he had been something else, as many a devastated pocket on the east of the Rockies could bear witness; and his new career was alien to his soul. Temptation grew greatly on him at the Pipi, and in the days before he yielded to it he might have been seen at midnight in his hut playing *solitaire*. Why he abstained at first from practising his real profession is accounted for in two ways: he had tasted some of the sweets of honest companionship with the Honourable and Shon, and then he had a memory of an ugly night at Pardon's Drive a year before, when he stood over his own brother's body, shot to death by accident in a gambling row having its origin with himself. These things had held him back for a time; but he was weaker than his ruling passion.

The Pipi was a young and comparatively virgin field; the quarry was at his hand. He did not love money for its own sake; it was the game that enthralled him. He would have played his life against the treasury of a kingdom, and, winning it with loaded double sixes, have handed back the spoil as an unredeemable national debt.

He fell at last, and in falling conquered the Pipi Valley; at the same time he was considered a fearless and liberal citizen, who could shoot as straight as he played well. He made an excursion to another field,

however, at an opportune time, and it was during this interval that the accident to Shon and the Honourable had happened. He returned but a few hours before this quarrel with Shon occurred, and in the Saints' Repose, whither he had at once gone, he was told of the accident. While his informant related the incident and the romantic sequence of Shon's infatuation, the woman passed the tavern and was pointed out to Pierre. The half-breed had not much excitableness in his nature, but when he saw this beautiful woman with a touch of the Indian in her contour, his pale face flushed, and he showed his set teeth under his slight moustache. He watched her until she entered a shop, on the signboard of which was written—written since he had left a few months ago—*Lucy Rives, Tobacconist.*

Shon had then entered the Saints' Repose; and we know the rest. A couple of hours after this nervous episode, Pierre might have been seen standing in the shadow of the pines not far from the house at Ward's Mistake, where, he had been told, Lucy Rives lived with an old Indian woman. He stood, scarcely moving, and smoking cigarettes, until the door opened. Shon came out and walked down the hillside to the town. Then Pierre went to the door, and without knocking, opened it, and entered. A woman started up from a seat where she was sewing, and turned towards him. As she did so, the work, Shon's coat, dropped from her hands, her face paled, and her eyes grew big with fear. She leaned against a chair for support—this man's presence had weakened her so. She stood silent, save for a slight moan that broke from her lips, as Pierre lighted a cigarette coolly, and then said to an old Indian woman who sat upon the floor braiding a basket: "Get up, Ikni, and go away."

Ikni rose, came over, and peered into the face of the half-breed. Then she muttered: "I know you—I know you. The dead has come back again." She caught his arm with her bony fingers as if to satisfy herself that he was flesh and blood, and shaking her head dolefully, went from the room. When the door closed behind her there was silence, broken only by an exclamation from the man.

The other drew her hand across her eyes, and dropped it with a motion of despair. Then Pierre said, sharply: "*Bien?*"

"François," she replied, "you are alive!"

"Yes, I am alive, Lucy."

She shuddered, then grew still again and whispered: "Why did you let it be thought that you were drowned? Why? Oh, why?" she moaned.

He raised his eyebrows slightly, and between the puffs of smoke, said:

"Ah yes, my Lucy, why? It was so long ago. Let me see: so—so—ten years. Ten years is a long time to remember, eh?"

He came towards her. She drew back; but her hand remained on the chair. He touched the plain gold ring on her finger, and said:

"You still wear it. To think of that—so loyal for a woman! How she remembers,—holy Mother! . . . But shall I not kiss you, yes, just once after eight years —my wife?"

She breathed hard and drew back against the wall, dazed and frightened, and said:

"No, no, do not come near me; do not speak to me —ah, please, stand back, for a moment—please!"

He shrugged his shoulders slightly, and continued, with mock tenderness:

"To think that things come round so! And here you have a home. But that is good. I am tired of much travel and life all alone. The prodigal goes not to the home, the home comes to the prodigal." He stretched up his arms as if with a feeling of content.

"Do you—do you not know," she said, "that—that—"

He interrupted her:

"Do I not know, Lucy, that this is your home? Yes. But is it not all the same? I gave you a home ten years ago—to think, ten years ago! We quarrelled one night, and I left you. Next morning my boat was found below the White Cascade—yes, but that was so stale a trick! It was not worthy of François Rives. He would do it so much better now; but he was young then; just a boy, and foolish. Well, sit down, Lucy, it is a long story, and you have much to tell, how much—who knows?"

She came slowly forward and said with a painful effort:

"You did a great wrong, François. You have killed me."

"Killed you, Lucy, my wife! *Pardon!* Never in those days did you look so charming as now—never. But the great surprise of seeing your husband, it has made you shy, quite shy. There will be much time now for you to change all that. It is quite pleasant to think on, Lucy. . . . You remember the song we used to sing on the Chaudière at St. Antoine? See, I have not forgotten it—

> "'*Nos amants sont en guerre,*
> *Vole, mon cœur, vole.*'"

He hummed the lines over and over, watching through his half-shut eyes the torture he was inflicting.

"Oh, Mother of God," she whispered, "have mercy! Can you not see, do you not know? I am not as you left me."

"Yes, my wife, you are just the same; not an hour older. I am glad that you have come to me. But how they will envy Pretty Pierre!"

"Envy—Pretty—Pierre," she repeated, in distress; "are you Pretty Pierre? Ah, I might have known, I might have known!"

"Yes, and so! Is not Pretty Pierre as good a name as François Rives? Is it not as good as Shon McGann?"

"Oh, I see it all, I see it all now!" she said mournfully. "It was with you he quarrelled, and about me. He would not tell me what it was. You know, then, that I am—that I am married—to him?"

"Quite. I know all that; but it is no marriage." He rose to his feet slowly, dropping the cigarette from his lips as he did so. "Yes," he continued, "and I know that you prefer Shon McGann to Pretty Pierre."

She spread out her hands appealingly.

"But you are my wife, not his. Listen: do you know what I shall do? I will tell you in two hours. It is now eight o'clock. At ten o'clock Shon McGann will meet me at the Saints' Repose. Then you shall know. . . . Ah, it is a pity! Shon was my good friend, but this spoils all that. Wine—it has danger; cards—there is peril in that sport; women—they make trouble most of all."

"O God," she piteously said, "what did I do? There was no sin in me. I was your faithful wife, though you were cruel to me. You left me, cheated me, brought this upon me. It is you that has done this wickedness, not I." She buried her face in her hands, falling on her knees beside the chair.

He bent above her: "You loved the young *avocat* better, eight years ago."

She sprang to her feet. "Ah, now I understand," she said. "That was why you quarrelled with me; why you deserted me. You were not man enough to say what made you so much the—so wicked and hard, so—"

"Be thankful, Lucy, that I did not kill you then," he interjected.

"But it is a lie," she cried; "a lie!"

She went to the door and called the Indian woman.

"Ikni," she said. "He dares to say evil of André and me. Think—of André!"

Ikni came to him, put her wrinkled face close to his, and said: "She was yours, only yours; but the spirits gave you a devil. André, oh, oh, André! The father of André was her father—ah, that makes your sulky eyes to open. Ikni knows how to speak. Ikni nursed them both. If you had waited you should have known. But you ran away like a wolf from a coal of fire; you shammed death like a fox; you come back like the snake to crawl into the house and strike with poison tooth, when you should be with the worms in the ground. But Ikni knows—you shall be struck with poison too, the Spirit of the Red Knife waits for you. André was her brother."

He pushed her aside savagely: "Be still!" he said. "Get out—quick. *Sacré*—quick!"

When they were alone again he continued with no anger in his tone: "So, André the *avocat* and you—that, eh? Well, you see how much trouble has come; and now this other—a secret too. When were you married to Shon McGann?"

'Last night," she bitterly replied; "a priest came over from the Indian village."

"Last night," he musingly repeated. "Last night I lost two thousand dollars at the Little Goshen field. I did not play well last night; I was nervous. In ten years I had not lost so much at one game as I did last night. It was a punishment for playing too honest, or something; eh, what do you think, Lucy—or something, *hein?*"

She said nothing, but rocked her body to and fro.

"Why did you not make known the marriage with Shon?"

"He was to have told it to-night," she said.

There was silence for a moment, then a thought flashed into his eyes, and he rejoined with a jarring laugh, "Well, I will play a game to-night, Lucy Rives; such a game that Pretty Pierre will never be forgotten in the Pipi Valley—a beautiful game, just for two. And the other who will play—the wife of François Rives shall see if she will wait; but she must be patient, more patient than her husband was ten years ago."

"What will you do—tell me, what will you do?"

"I will play a game of cards—just one magnificent game; and the cards shall settle it. All shall be quite fair, as when you and I played in the little house by the Chaudière—at first, Lucy,—before I was a devil."

Was this peculiar softness to his last tones assumed or real? She looked at him inquiringly; but he moved away to the window, and stood gazing down the hillside towards the town below. His eyes smarted.

"I will die," she said to herself in whispers—"I will die." A minute passed, and then Pierre turned and said to her: "Lucy, he is coming up the hill. Listen. If you tell him that I have seen you, I will shoot him on sight, dead. You would save him, for a little, for an hour or two—or more? Well, do as I say; for these

things must be according to the rules of the game, and I myself will tell him all at the Saints' Repose. He gave me the lie there, and I will tell him the truth before them all there. Will you do as I say?"

She hesitated an instant, and then replied: "I will not tell him."

"There is only one way, then," he continued. "You must go at once from here into the woods behind there, and not see him at all. Then at ten o'clock you will come to the Saints' Repose, if you choose, to know how the game has ended."

She was trembling, moaning, no longer. A set look had come into her face; her eyes were steady and hard. She quietly replied: "Yes, I shall be there."

He came to her, took her hand, and drew from her finger the wedding-ring which last night Shon McGann had placed there. She submitted passively. Then, with an upward wave of his fingers, he spoke in a mocking lightness, but without any of the malice which had first appeared in his tones, words from an old French song:

> "I say no more, my lady—
> *Mironton, Mironton, Mirontaine!*
> I say no more, my lady,
> As nought more can be said."

He opened the door, motioned to the Indian woman, and, in a few moments, the broken-hearted Lucy Rives and her companion were hidden in the pines; and Pretty Pierre also disappeared into the shadow of the woods as Shon McGann appeared on the crest of the hill.

The Irishman walked slowly to the door, and pausing, said to himself: "I couldn't run the big risk, me darlin', without seein' you again, God help me! There's

danger ahead which little I'd care for if it wasn't for you."

Then he stepped inside the house—the place was silent; he called, but no one answered; he threw open the doors of the rooms, but they were empty; he went outside and called again, but no reply came, except the flutter of a night-hawk's wings and the cry of a whip-poorwill. He went back into the house and sat down with his head between his hands. So, for a moment, and then he raised his head, and said with a sad smile: "Faith, Shon, me boy, this takes the life out of you!—the empty house where she ought to be, and the smile of her so swate, and the hand of her that falls on y'r shoulder like a dove on the blessed altar—gone, and lavin' a chill on y'r heart like a touch of the dead. Sure, nivir a wan of me saw any that could stand wid her for goodness, barrin' the angel that kissed me good-bye with one foot in the stirrup an' the troopers behind me, now twelve years gone, in ould Donegal, and that I'll niver see again, she lyin' where the hate of the world will vex the heart of her no more, and the masses gone up for her soul. Twice, twice in y'r life, Shon McGann, has the cup of God's joy been at y'r lips, and is it both times that it's to spill?—Pretty Pierre shoots straight and sudden, and maybe it's aisy to see the end of it; but as the just God is above us, I'll give him the lie in his throat betimes for the word he said agin me darlin'. What's the avil thing that he has to say? What's the divil's proof he would bring? And where is she now? Where are you, Lucy? I know the proof I've got in me heart that the wreck of the world couldn't shake, while that light, born of Heaven, swims up to your eyes whin you look at me!"

He rose to his feet again and walked to and fro; he

went once more to the doors; he looked here and there through the growing dusk, but to no purpose. She had said that she would not go to her shop this night; but if not, then where could she have gone—and Ikni, too? He felt there was more awry in his life than he cared to put into thought or speech. He picked up the sewing she had dropped and looked at it as one would regard a relic of the dead; he lifted her handkerchief, kissed it, and put it in his breast. He took a revolver from his pocket and examined it closely, looked round the room as though to fasten it in his memory, and then passed out, closing the door behind him. He walked down the hillside and went to her shop in the one street of the town, but she was not there, nor had the lad in charge seen her.

Meanwhile, Pretty Pierre had made his way to the Saints' Repose, and was sitting among the miners indolently smoking. In vain he was asked to play cards. His one reply was, "No, *pardon*, no! I play one game only to-night, the biggest game ever played in Pipi Valley." In vain, also, was he asked to drink. He refused the hospitality, defying the danger that such lack of good-fellowship might bring forth. He hummed in patches to himself the words of a song that the *brûlés* were wont to sing when they hunted the buffalo:

"*Voilà!* it is the sport to ride—
Ah, ah the brave hunter!
To thrust the arrow in his hide,
To send the bullet through his side—
Ici, the buffalo, *joli!*
Ah, ah the buffalo!"

He nodded here and there as men entered; but he did not stir from his seat. He smoked incessantly, and his

eyes faced the door of the bar-room that entered upon the street. There was no doubt in the minds of any present that the promised excitement would occur. Shon McGann was as fearless as he was gay. And Pipi Valley remembered the day in which he had twice risked his life to save two women from a burning building—Lady Jane and another. And Lady Jane this evening was agitated, and once or twice furtively looked at something under the bar-counter; in fact, a close observer would have noticed anger or anxiety in the eyes of the daughter of Dick Waldron, the keeper of the Saints' Repose. Pierre would certainly have seen it had he been looking that way. An unusual influence was working upon the frequenters of the busy tavern. Planned, premeditated excitement was out of their line. Unexpectedness was the salt of their existence. This thing had an air of system not in accord with the suddenness of the Pipi mind. The half-breed was the only one entirely at his ease; he was languid and nonchalant; the long lashes of his half-shut eyelids gave his face a pensive look. At last King Kinkley walked over to him and said: "There's an almighty mysteriousness about this event which isn't joyful, Pretty Pierre. We want to see the muss cleared up, of course; we want Shon McGann to act like a high-toned citizen, and there's a general prejudice in favour of things bein' on the flat of your palm, as it were. Now this thing hangs fire, and there's a lack of animation about it, isn't there?"

To this, Pretty Pierre replied: "What can I do? This is not like other things; one had to wait; great things take time. To shoot is easy; but to shoot is not all, as you shall see if you have a little patience. Ah, my friend, where there is a woman, things are different.

I throw a glass in your face, we shoot, someone dies, and there it is quite plain of reason; you play a card which was dealt just now, I call you—something, and the swiftest finger does the trick; but in such as this, one must wait for the sport."

It was at this point that Shon McGann entered, looked round, nodded to all, and then came forward to the table where Pretty Pierre sat. As the other took out his watch, Shon said firmly but quietly: "Pierre, I gave you the lie to-day concerning me wife, and I'm here, as I said I'd be, to stand by the word I passed then."

Pierre waved his fingers lightly towards the other, and slowly rose. Then he said in sharp tones: "Yes, Shon McGann, you gave me the lie. There is but one thing for that in Pipi Valley. You choked me; I would not take that from a saint of heaven; but there was another thing to do first. Well, I have done it; I said I would bring proofs—I have them." He paused, and now there might have been seen a shining moisture on his forehead, and his words came menacingly from between his teeth, while the room became breathlessly still, save that in the silence a sleeping dog sighed heavily: "Shon McGann," he added, "you are living with my wife."

Twenty men drew in a sharp breath of excitement, and Shon came a step nearer the other, and said in a strange voice: "I—am—living—with—your —wife?"

"As I say, with my wife, Lucy Rives. François Rives was my name ten years ago. We quarrelled. I left her, and I never saw her again until to-night. You went to see her two hours ago. You did not find her. Why? She was gone because her husband, Pierre, told

her to go. You want a proof? You shall have it. Here is the wedding-ring you gave her last night."

He handed it over, and Shon saw inside it his own name and hers.

"My God!" he said. "Did she know? Tell me she didn't know, Pierre?"

"No, she did not know. I have truth to speak to-night. I was jealous, mad, and foolish, and I left her. My boat was found upset. They believed I was drowned. *Bien*, she waited until yesterday, and then she took you—but she was my wife; she is my wife—and so you see!"

The Irishman was deadly pale.

"It's an avil heart y' had in y' then, Pretty Pierre, and it's an avil day that brought this thing to pass, and there's only wan way to the end of it."

"So, that is true. There is only one way," was the reply; "but what shall that way be? Someone must go: there must be no mistake. I have to propose. Here on this table we lay a revolver. We will give up these which we have in our pockets. Then we will play a game of euchre, and the winner of the game shall have the revolver. We will play for a life. That is fair, eh—that is fair?" he said to those around.

King Kinkley, speaking for the rest, replied: "That's about fair. It gives both a chance, and leaves only two when it's over. While the woman lives, one of you is naturally in the way. Pierre left her in a way that isn't handsome; but a wife's a wife, and though Shon was all in the glum about the thing, and though the woman isn't to be blamed either, there's one too many of you, and there's got to be a vacation for somebody. Isn't that so?"

The rest nodded assent. They had been so engaged

that they did not see a woman enter the bar from behind, and crouch down beside Lady Jane, a woman whom the latter touched affectionately on the shoulder and whispered to once or twice, while she watched the preparations for the game.

The two men sat down, Shon facing the bar and Pierre with his back to it.

The game began, neither man showing a sign of nervousness, though Shon was very pale. The game was to finish for ten points. Men crowded about the tables silent but keenly excited; cigars were chewed instead of smoked, and liquor was left undrunk. At the first deal Pierre made a march, securing two. At the next Shon made a point, and at the next also a march. The half-breed was playing a straight game. He could have stacked the cards, but he did not do so; deft as he was he might have cheated even the vigilant eyes about him, but it was not so; he played as squarely as a novice. At the third, at the fourth, deal he made a march; at the fifth, sixth, and seventh deals, Shon made a march, a point, and a march. Both now had eight points. At the next deal both got a point, and both stood at nine!

Now came the crucial play.

During the progress of the game nothing had been heard save the sound of a knuckle on the table, the *flip-flip* of the pasteboard, or the rasp of a heel on the floor. There was a set smile on Shon's face—a forgotten smile, for the rest of the face was stern and tragic. Pierre smoked cigarettes, pausing, while his opponent was shuffling and dealing, to light them.

Behind the bar as the game proceeded the woman who knelt beside Lady Jane listened to every sound. Her eyes grew more agonised as the numbers, whis-

pered to her by her companion, climbed to the fatal ten.

The last deal was Shon's; there was that much to his advantage. As he slowly dealt, the woman—Lucy Rives—rose to her feet behind Lady Jane. So absorbed were all that none saw her. Her eyes passed from Pierre to Shon, and stayed.

When the cards were dealt, with but one point for either to gain, and so win and save his life, there was a slight pause before the two took them up. They did not look at one another; but each glanced at the revolver, then at the men nearest them, and lastly, for an instant, at the cards themselves, with their pasteboard faces of life and death turned downward. As the players picked them up at last and spread them out fan-like, Lady Jane slipped something into the hand of Lucy Rives.

Those who stood behind Shon McGann stared with anxious astonishment at his hand; it contained only nine and ten spots. It was easy to see the direction of the sympathy of Pipi Valley. The Irishman's face turned a slight shade paler, but he did not tremble or appear disturbed.

Pierre played his biggest card and took the point. He coolly counted one, and said, "Game. I win."

The crowd drew back. Both rose to their feet. In the painful silence the half-breed's hand was gently laid on the revolver. He lifted it, and paused slightly, his eyes fixed to the steady look in those of Shon McGann. He raised the revolver again, till it was level with Shon's forehead, *till it was even with his hair!* Then there was a shot, and someone fell—not Shon, but Pierre, saying, as they caught him, "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* From behind!"

Instantly there was another shot, and someone crashed against the bottles in the bar. The other factor in the game, the wife, had shot at Pierre, and then sent a bullet through her own lungs.

Shon stood for a moment as if he was turned to stone, and then his head dropped in his arms upon the table. He had seen both shots fired, but could not speak in time.

Pierre was severely but not dangerously wounded in the neck.

But the woman—? They brought her out from behind the counter. She still breathed; but on her eyes was the film of coming death. She turned to where Shon sat. Her lips framed his name, but no voice came forth. Someone touched him on the shoulder. He looked up and caught her last glance. He came and stooped beside her; but she had died with that one glance from him, bringing a faint smile to her lips. And the smile stayed when the life of her had fled—fled through the cloud over her eyes, from the tide-beat of her pulse. It swept out from the smoke and reeking air into the open world, and beyond, into those untried paths where all must walk alone, and in what bitterness, known only to the Master of the World who sees these piteous things, and orders in what fashion distorted lives shall be made straight and wholesome in the Places of Readjustment.

Shon stood silent above the dead body.

One by one the miners went out quietly. Presently Pierre nodded towards the door, and King Kinkley and another lifted him and carried him towards it. Before they passed into the street he made them turn him so that he could see Shon. He waved his hand towards her that had been his wife, and said: "She

should have shot but once and straight, Shon McGann, and then!—Eh, *bien!*"

The door closed, and Shon McGann was left alone with the dead.

ANTOINE AND ANGELIQUE

ANTOINE AND ANGELIQUE

"The birds are going south, Antoine—see—and it is so early!"

"Yes, Angelique, the winter will be long."

There was a pause, and then: "Antoine, I heard a child cry in the night, and I could not sleep."

"It was a devil-bird, my wife; it flies slowly, and the summer is dead."

"Antoine, there was a rushing of wings by my bed before the morn was breaking."

"The wild-geese know their way in the night, Angelique; but they flew by the house and not near thy bed."

"The two black squirrels have gone from the hickory tree."

"They have hidden away with the bears in the earth; for the frost comes, and it is the time of sleep."

"A cold hand was knocking at my heart when I said my *aves* last night, my Antoine."

"The heart of a woman feels many strange things: I cannot answer, my wife."

"Let us go also southward, Antoine, before the great winds and the wild frost come."

"I love thee, Angelique, but I cannot go."

"Is not love greater than all?"

"To keep a pledge is greater."

"Yet if evil come?"

"There is the mine."

"None travels hither; who should find it?"

"He said to me, my wife: 'Antoine, will you stay

and watch the mine until I come with the birds northward, again?' and I said: 'I will stay, and Angelique will stay; I will watch the mine.'"

"This is for his riches, but for our peril, Antoine."

"Who can say whither a woman's fancy goes? It is full of guessing. It is clouds and darkness to-day, and sunshine—so much—to-morrow. I cannot answer."

"I have a fear; if my husband loved me—"

"There is the mine," he interrupted firmly.

"When my heart aches so—"

"Angelique, there is the mine."

"Ah, my Antoine!"

And so these two stayed on the island of St. Jean, in Lake Superior, through the purple haze of autumn, into the white brilliancy of winter, guarding the Rose Tree Mine, which Falding the Englishman and his companions had prospected and declared to be their Ophir.

But St. Jean was far from the ways of settlement, and there was little food and only one hut, and many things must be done for the Rose Tree Mine in the places where men sell their souls for money; and Antoine and Angelique, French peasants from the parish of Ste. Iréne in Quebec, were left to guard the place of treasure, until, to the sound of the laughing spring, there should come many men and much machinery, and the sinking of shafts in the earth, and the making of riches.

But when Antoine and Angelique were left alone in the waste, and God began to draw the pale coverlet of frost slowly across land and water, and to surround St. Jean with a stubborn moat of ice, the heart of the woman felt some coming danger, and at last broke forth in words of timid warning. When she once had spoken she said no more, but stayed and builded the

heaps of earth about the house, and filled every crevice against the inhospitable Spirit of Winds, and drew her world closer and closer within those two rooms where they should live through many months.

The winter was harsh, but the hearts of the two were strong. They loved; and Love is the parent of endurance, the begetter of courage. And every day, because it seemed his duty, Antoine inspected the Rose Tree Mine; and every day also, because it seemed her duty, Angelique said many *aves*. And one prayer was much with her—for spring to come early that the child should not suffer: the child which the good God was to give to her and Antoine.

In the first hours of each evening Antoine smoked, and Angelique sang the old songs which their ancestors learned in Normandy. One night Antoine's face was lighted with a fine fire as he talked of happy days in the parish of Ste. Iréne; and with that romantic fervour of his race which the stern winters of Canada could not kill, he sang, *A la Claire Fontaine*, the well-beloved song-child of the *voyageurs*' hearts.

And the wife smiled far away into the dancing flames —far away, because the fire retreated, retreated to the little church where they two were wed; and she did as most good women do—though exactly why, man the insufficient cannot declare—she wept a little through her smiles. But when the last verse came, both smiles and tears ceased. Antoine sang it with a fond monotony:

"Would that each rose were growing
Upon the rose-tree gay,
And that the fatal rose-tree
Deep in the ocean lay.
I ya longtemps que je t'aime
Jamais je ne t'oublierai."

Angelique's heart grew suddenly heavy. From the rose-tree of the song her mind fled and shivered before the leafless rose-tree by the mine; and her old dread came back.

Of course this was foolish of Angelique; of course the wise and great throw contumely on all such superstition; and knowing women will smile at each other meaningly, and with pity for a dull man-writer, and will whisper, "Of course, the child." But many things, your majesties, are hidden from your wisdom and your greatness, and are given to the simple—to babes, and the mothers of babes.

It was upon this very night that Falding the Englishman sat with other men in a London tavern, talking joyously. "There's been the luck of Heaven," he said, "in the whole exploit. We'd been prospecting for months. As a sort of try in a back-water we rowed over one night to an island and pitched tents. Not a dozen yards from where we camped was a rose-tree—think of it, Belgard, a rose-tree on a rag-tag island of Lake Superior! 'There's luck in odd numbers, says Rory O'More.' 'There's luck here,' said I; and at it we went just beside the rose-tree. What's the result? Look at that prospectus: a company with a capital of two hundred thousand; the whole island in our hands in a week; and Antoine squatting on it now like Bonaparte on Elbe."

"And what does Antoine get out of this?" said Belgard.

"Forty dollars a month and his keep."

"Why not write him off twenty shares to propitiate the gods—gifts unto the needy, eh!—a thousand-fold—what?"

"Yes; it might be done, Belgard, if—"

But someone just then proposed the toast, "The Rose Tree Mine!" and the souls of these men waxed proud and merry, for they had seen the investor's palm filled with gold, the maker of conquest. While Antoine was singing with his wife, they were holding revel within the sound of Bow Bells. And far into the night, through silent Cheapside, a rolling voice swelled through much laughter thus:

"Gai lon la, gai le rosier,
Du joli mois de Mai."

The next day there were heavy heads in London; but the next day, also, a man lay ill in the hut on the island of St. Jean.

Antoine had sung his last song. He had waked in the night with a start of pain, and by the time the sun was halting at noon above the Rose Tree Mine, he had begun a journey, the record of which no man has ever truly told, neither its beginning nor its end; because that which is of the spirit refuseth to be interpreted by the flesh. Some signs there be, but they are brief and shadowy; the awe of It is hidden in the mind of him that goeth out lonely unto God.

When the call goes forth, not wife nor child nor any other can hold the wayfarer back, though he may loiter for an instant on the brink. The poor medicaments which Angelique brings avail not; these soothing hands and healing tones, they pass through clouds of the middle place between heaven and earth to Antoine. It is only when the second midnight comes that, with conscious, but pensive and far-off, eyes, he says to her: "Angelique, my wife."

For reply her lips pressed his cheek, and her fingers

hungered for his neck. Then: "Is there pain now, Antoine?"

"There is no pain, Angelique."

He closed his eyes slowly; her lips framed an *ave*.

"The mine," he said, "the mine—until the spring."

"Yes, Antoine, until the spring."

"Have you candles—many candles, Angelique?"

"There are many, my husband."

"The ground is as iron; one cannot dig, and the water under the ice is cruel—is it not so, Angelique?"

"No axe could break the ground, and the water is cruel," she said.

"You will see my face until the winter is gone, my wife."

She bowed her head, but smoothed his hand meanwhile, and her throat was quivering.

He partly slept—his body slept, though his mind was feeling its way to wonderful things. But near the morning his eyes opened wide, and he said: "Someone calls out of the dark, Angelique."

And she, with her hand on her heart, replied: "It is the cry of a dog, Antoine."

"But there are footsteps at the door, my wife."

"Nay, Antoine; it is the snow beating upon the window."

"There is the sound of wings close by—dost thou not hear them, Angelique?"

"Wings—wings," she falteringly said: "it is the hot blast through the chimney; the night is cold, Antoine."

"The night is very cold," he said; and he trembled. . . . "I hear, O my wife, I hear the voice of a little child . . . the voice is like thine, Angelique."

And she, not knowing what to reply, said softly:

"There is hope in the voice of a child;" and the mother stirred within her; and in the moment he knew also that the Spirits would give her the child in safety, that she should not be alone in the long winter.

The sounds of the harsh night had ceased—the snapping of the leafless branches, the cracking of the earth, and the heaving of the rocks: the Spirits of the Frost had finished their work; and just as the grey forehead of dawn appeared beyond the cold hills, Antoine cried out gently: "Angelique . . . *Ah, mon Capitaine* . . . *Jésu*" . . . and then, no more.

Night after night Angelique lighted candles in the place where Antoine smiled on in his frozen silence; and masses were said for his soul—the masses Love murmurs for its dead. The earth could not receive him; its bosom was adamant; but no decay could touch him; and she dwelt alone with this, that was her husband, until one beautiful, bitter day, when, with no eye save God's to see her, and no human comfort by her, she gave birth to a man-child. And yet that night she lighted the candles at the dead man's head and feet, dragging herself thither in the cold; and in her heart she said that the smile on Antoine's face was deeper than it had been before.

In the early spring, when the earth painfully breathed away the frost that choked it, with her child for mourner, and herself for sexton and priest, she buried Antoine with maimed rites: but hers were the prayers of the poor, and of the pure in heart; and she did not fret because, in the hour that her comrade was put away into the dark, the world was laughing at the thought of coming summer.

Before another sunrise, the owners of the island of St. Jean claimed what was theirs; and because that

which had happened worked upon their hearts, they called the child St. Jean, and from that time forth they made him to enjoy the goodly fruits of the Rose Tree Mine.

THE CIPHER

THE CIPHER

Hilton was staying his horse by a spring at Guidon Hill when he first saw her. She was gathering may-apples; her apron was full of them. He noticed that she did not stir until he rode almost upon her. Then she started, first without looking round, as does an animal, dropping her head slightly to one side, though not exactly appearing to listen. Suddenly she wheeled on him, and her big eyes captured him. The look bewildered him. She was a creature of singular fascination. Her face was expressive. Her eyes had wonderful light. She looked happy, yet grave withal; it was the gravity of an uncommon earnestness. She gazed through everything, and beyond. She was young—eighteen or so.

Hilton raised his hat, and courteously called a good-morning at her. She did not reply by any word, but nodded quaintly, and blinked seriously and yet blithely on him. He was preparing to dismount. As he did so he paused, astonished that she did not speak at all. Her face did not have a familiar language; its vocabulary was its own. He slid from his horse, and, throwing his arm over its neck as it stooped to the spring, looked at her more intently, but respectfully too. She did not yet stir, but there came into her face a slight inflection of confusion or perplexity. Again he raised his hat to her, and, smiling, wished her a good-morning. Even as he did so a thought sprung in him. Understanding gave place to wonder; he interpreted the unusual look in her face.

Instantly he made a sign to her. To that her face responded with a wonderful speech—of relief and recognition. The corners of her apron dropped from her fingers, and the yellow may-apples fell about her feet. She did not notice this. She answered his sign with another, rapid, graceful, and meaning. He left his horse and advanced to her, holding out his hand simply—for he was a simple and honest man. Her response to this was spontaneous. The warmth of her fingers invaded him. Her eyes were full of questioning. He gave a hearty sign of admiration. She flushed with pleasure, but made a naïve, protesting gesture.

She was deaf and dumb.

Hilton had once a sister who was a mute. He knew that amazing primal gesture-language of the silent race, whom God has sent like one-winged birds into the world. He had watched in his sister just such looks of absolute nature as flashed from this girl. They were comrades on the instant; he reverential, gentle, protective; she sanguine, candid, beautifully aboriginal in the freshness of her cipher-thoughts. She saw the world naked, with a naked eye. She was utterly natural. She was the maker of exquisite, vital gesture-speech.

She glided out from among the may-apples and the long, silken grass, to charm his horse with her hand. As she started to do so, he hastened to prevent her, but, utterly surprised, he saw the horse whinny to her cheek, and arch his neck under her white palm—it was very white. Then the animal's chin sought her shoulder and stayed placid. He had never done so to anyone before save Hilton. Once, indeed, he had kicked a stableman to death. He lifted his head and caught with playful shaking lips at her ear. Hilton smiled; and so, as we said, their comradeship began.

He was a new officer of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Guidon. She was the daughter of a ranchman. She had been educated by Father Corraine, the Jesuit missionary, Protestant though she was. He had learned the sign-language while assistant-priest in a Parisian chapel for mutes. He taught her this gesture-tongue, which she, taking, rendered divine; and, with this, she learned to read and write.

Her name was Ida.

Ida was faultless. Hilton was not; but no man is. To her, however, he was the best that man can be. He was unselfish and altogether honest, and that is much for a man.

When Pierre came to know of their friendship he shook his head doubtfully. One day he was sitting on the hot side of a pine near his mountain hut, soaking in the sun. He saw them passing below him, along the edge of the hill across the ravine. He said to someone behind him in the shade, who was looking also,—"What will be the end of that, eh?"

And the someone replied: "Faith, what the Serpent in the Wilderness couldn't cure."

"You think he'll play with her?"

"I think he'll do it without wishin' or willin', maybe. It'll be a case of kiss and ride away."

There was silence. Soon Pierre pointed down again. She stood upon a green mound with a cool hedge of rock behind her, her feet on the margin of solid sunlight, her forehead bared. Her hair sprinkled round her as she gently threw back her head. Her face was full on Hilton. She was telling him something. Her gestures were rhythmical, and admirably balanced. Because they were continuous or only regularly broken, it was clear she was telling him a story. Hilton gravely, de-

lightedly, nodded response now and then, or raised his eyebrows in fascinated surprise. Pierre, watching, was only aware of vague impressions—not any distinct outline of the tale. At last he guessed it as a perfect pastoral—birds, reaping, deer, winds, sundials, cattle, shepherds, hunting. To Hilton it was a new revelation. She was telling him things she had thought, she was recalling her life.

Towards the last, she said in gesture: "You can forget the winter, but not the spring. You like to remember the spring. It is the beginning. When the daisy first peeps, when the tall young deer first stands upon its feet, when the first egg is seen in the oriole's nest, when the sap first sweats from the tree, when you first look into the eye of your friend—these you want to remember. . . ."

She paused upon this gesture—a light touch upon the forehead, then the hands stretched out, palms upward, with coaxing fingers. She seemed lost in it. Her eyes rippled, her lips pressed slightly, a delicate wine crept through her cheek, and tenderness wimpled all. Her soft breast rose modestly to the cool texture of her dress. Hilton felt his blood bound joyfully; he had the wish of instant possession. But yet he could not stir, she held him so; for a change immediately passed upon her. She glided slowly from that almost statue-like repose into another gesture. Her eyes drew up from his, and looked away to plumbless distance, all glowing and childlike, and the new ciphers slowly said:

"But the spring dies away. We can only see a thing born once. And it may be ours, yet not ours. I have sighted the perfect Sharon-flower, far up on Guidon, yet it was not mine; it was too distant; I could not reach it. I have seen the silver bullfinch floating along

the cañon. I called to it, and it came singing; and it was mine, yet I could not hear its song, and I let it go; it could not be happy so with me. . . . I stand at the gate of a great city, and see all, and feel the great shuttles of sounds, the roar and clack of wheels, the horses' hoofs striking the ground, the hammer of bells; all: and yet it is not mine; it is far, far away from me. It is one world, mine is another; and sometimes it is lonely, and the best things are not for me. But I have seen them, and it is pleasant to remember, and nothing can take from us the hour when things were born, when we saw the spring—nothing—never!"

Her manner of speech, as this went on, became exquisite in fineness, slower, and more dream-like, until, with downward protesting motions of the hand, she said that "nothing—never!" Then a great sigh surged up her throat, her lips parted slightly, showing the warm moist whiteness of her teeth, her hands falling lightly, drew together and folded in front of her. She stood still.

Pierre had watched this scene intently, his chin in his hands, his elbows on his knees. Presently he drew himself up, ran a finger meditatively along his lip, and said to himself: "It is perfect. She is carved from the core of nature. But this thing has danger for her . . . *bien!* . . . ah!"

A change in the scene before him caused this last expression of surprise.

Hilton, rousing from the enchanting pantomime, took a step towards her; but she raised her hand pleadingly, restrainingly, and he paused. With his eyes he asked her mutely why. She did not answer, but, all at once transformed into a thing of abundant sprightliness, ran down the hillside, tossing up her arms gaily. Yet her

face was not all brilliance. Tears hung at her eyes. But Hilton did not see these. He did not run, but walked quickly, following her; and his face had a determined look. Immediately, a man rose up from behind a rock on the same side of the ravine, and shook clenched fists after the departing figures; then stood gesticulating angrily to himself, until, chancing to look up, he sighted Pierre, and straightway dived into the underbrush. Pierre rose to his feet, and said slowly: "Hilton, there may be trouble for you also. It is a tangled world."

Towards evening Pierre sauntered to the house of Ida's father. Light of footstep, he came upon the girl suddenly. They had always been friends since the day when, at uncommon risk, he rescued her dog from a freshet on the Wild Moose River. She was sitting utterly still, her hands folded in her lap. He struck his foot smartly on the ground. She felt the vibration, and looked up. He doffed his hat, and she held out her hand. He smiled and took it, and, as it lay in his, looked at it for a moment musingly. She drew it back slowly. He was then thinking that it was the most intelligent hand he had ever seen. . . . He determined to play a bold and surprising game. He had learned from her the alphabet of the fingers—that is, how to spell words. He knew little gesture-language. He, therefore, spelled slowly: "Hawley is angry, because you love Hilton." The statement was so matter-of-fact, so sudden, that the girl had no chance. She flushed and then paled. She shook her head firmly, however, and her fingers slowly framed the reply: "You guess too much. Foolish things come to the idle."

"I saw you this afternoon," he silently urged.

Her fingers trembled slightly. "There was nothing

to see." She knew he could not have read her gestures. "I was telling a story."

"You ran from him—why?" His questioning was cruel that he might in the end be kind.

"The child runs from its shadow, the bird from its nest, the fish jumps from the water—that is nothing." She had recovered somewhat.

But he: "The shadow follows the child, the bird comes back to its nest, the fish cannot live beyond the water. But it is sad when the child, in running, rushes into darkness, and loses its shadow; when the nest falls from the tree; and the hawk catches the happy fish. . . . Hawley saw you also."

Hawley, like Ida, was deaf and dumb. He lived over the mountains, but came often. It had been understood that, one day, she should marry him. It seemed fitting. She had said neither yes nor no. And now?

A quick tremor of trouble trailed over her face, then it became very still. Her eyes were bent upon the ground steadily. Presently a bird hopped near, its head coquetting at her. She ran her hand gently along the grass towards it. The bird tripped on it. She lifted it to her chin, at which it pecked tenderly. Pierre watched her keenly—admiring, pitying. He wished to serve her. At last, with a kiss upon its head, she gave it a light toss into the air, and it soared, lark-like, straight up, and hanging over her head, sang the day into the evening. Her eyes followed it. She could feel that it was singing. She smiled and lifted a finger lightly towards it. Then she spelled to Pierre this: "It is singing to me. We imperfect things love each other."

"And what about loving Hawley, then?" Pierre persisted. She did not reply, but a strange look came upon her, and in the pause Hilton came from the house and

stood beside them. At this, Pierre lighted a cigarette, and with a good-natured nod to Hilton, walked away.

Hilton stooped over her, pale and eager. "Ida," he gestured, "will you answer me now? Will you be my wife?" She drew herself together with a little shiver. "No," was her steady reply. She ruled her face into stillness, so that it showed nothing of what she felt. She came to her feet wearily, and drawing down a cool flowering branch of chestnut, pressed it to her cheek.

"You do not love me?" he asked nervously.

"I am going to marry Luke Hawley," was her slow answer. She spelled the words. She used no gesture to that. The fact looked terribly hard and inflexible so. Hilton was not a vain man, and he believed he was not loved. His heart crowded to his throat.

"Please go away, now," she begged with an anxious gesture. While the hand was extended, he reached and brought it to his lips, then quickly kissed her on the forehead, and walked away. She stood trembling, and as the fingers of one hand hung at her side, they spelled mechanically these words: "It would spoil his life. I am only a mute—a dummy!"

As she stood so, she felt the approach of someone. She did not turn instantly, but with the aboriginal instinct, listened, as it were, with her body; but presently faced about—to Hawley. He was red with anger. He had seen Hilton kiss her. He caught her smartly by the arm, but, awed by the great calmness of her face, dropped it, and fell into a fit of sullenness. She spoke to him: he did not reply. She touched his arm: he still was gloomy. All at once the full price of her sacrifice rushed upon her; and overpowered her. She had no help at her critical hour, not even from this man she had intended to bless. There came a swift revulsion,

all passions stormed in her at once. Despair was the resultant of these forces. She swerved from him immediately, and ran hard towards the high-banked river!

Hawley did not follow her at once: he did not guess her purpose. She had almost reached the leaping-place, when Pierre shot from the trees, and seized her. The impulse of this was so strong, that they slipped, and quivered on the precipitous edge: but Pierre righted then, and presently they were safe.

Pierre held her hard by both wrists for a moment. Then, drawing her away, he loosed her, and spelled these words slowly: "I understand. But you are wrong. Hawley is not the man. You must come with me. It is foolish to die."

The riot of her feelings, her momentary despair, were gone. It was even pleasant to be mastered by Pierre's firmness. She was passive. Mechanically she went with him. Hawley approached. She looked at Pierre. Then she turned on the other. "Yours is not the best love," she signed to him; "it does not trust; it is selfish." And she moved on.

But, an hour later, Hilton caught her to his bosom, and kissed her full on the lips. . . . And his right to do so continues to this day.

A TRAGEDY OF NOBODIES

A TRAGEDY OF NOBODIES

At Fort Latrobe sentiment was not of the most refined kind. Local customs were pronounced and crude in outline; language was often highly coloured, and action was occasionally accentuated by a pistol shot. For the first few months of its life the place was honoured by the presence of neither wife, nor sister, nor mother. Yet women lived there.

When some men did bring wives and children, it was noticed that the girl Blanche was seldom seen in the streets. And, however it was, there grew among the men a faint respect for her. They did not talk of it to each other, but it existed. It was known that Blanche resented even the most casual notice from those men who had wives and homes. She gave the impression that she had a remnant of conscience.

"Go home," she said to Harry Delong, who asked her to drink with him on New Year's Day. "Go home, and thank God that you've got a home—and a wife."

After Jacques, the long-time friend of Pretty Pierre, came to Fort Latrobe, with his sulky eye and scrupulously neat attire, Blanche appeared to withdraw still more from public gaze, though no one saw any connection between these events. The girl also became fastidious in her dress, and lost all her former dash and smart aggression of manner. She shrank from the women of her class, for which, as might be expected, she was duly reviled. But the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, nor has it been written that

a woman may not close her ears, and bury herself in darkness, and travel alone in the desert with her people —those ghosts of herself, whose name is legion, and whose slow white fingers mock more than the world dare at its worst.

Suddenly, she was found behind the bar of Weir's Tavern at Cedar Point, the resort most frequented by Jacques. Word went about among the men that Blanche was taking a turn at religion, or, otherwise, reformation. Soldier Joe was something sceptical on this point from the fact that she had developed a very uncertain temper. This appeared especially noticeable in her treatment of Jacques. She made him the target for her sharpest sarcasm. Though a peculiar glow came to his eyes at times, he was never roused from his exasperating coolness. When her shafts were unusually direct and biting, and the temptation to resent was keen, he merely shrugged his shoulders, almost gently, and said: "Eh, such women!"

Nevertheless, there were men at Fort Latrobe who prophesied trouble, for they knew there was a deep strain of malice in the French half-breed which could be the more deadly because of its rare use. He was not easily moved, he viewed life from the heights of a philosophy which could separate the petty from the prodigious. His reputation was not wholly disquieting; he was of the goats, he had sometimes been found with the sheep, he preferred to be numbered with the transgressors. Like Pierre, his one passion was gambling. There were legends that once or twice in his life he had had another passion, but that some Gorgon drew out his heart-strings painfully, one by one, and left him inhabited by a pale spirit now called Irony, now Indifference—under either name a fret and an anger to women.

At last Blanche's attacks on Jacques called out anxious protests from men like rollicking Soldier Joe, who said to her one night, "Blanche, there's a devil in Jacques. Some day you'll startle him, and then he'll shoot you as cool as he empties the pockets of Freddy Tarlton over there."

And Blanche replied: "When he does that, what will you do, Joe?"

'Do? Do?" The man stroked his beard softly. "Why, give him ditto—cold."

"Well, then, there's nothing to row about, is there?"

And Soldier Joe was not on the instant clever enough to answer her sophistry; but when she left him and he had thought awhile, he said, convincingly:

"But where would you be then, Blanche? . . . That's the point."

One thing was known and certain: Blanche was earning her living by honest, if not high-class, labour. Weir the tavern-keeper said she was "worth hundreds" to him. But she grew pale, her eyes became peculiarly brilliant, her voice took a lower key, and lost a kind of hoarseness it had in the past. Men came in at times merely to have a joke at her expense, having heard of her new life; but they failed to enjoy their own attempts at humour. Women of her class came also, some with half-uncertain jibes, some with a curious wistfulness, and a few with scornful oaths; but the jibes and oaths were only for a time. It became known that she had paid the coach fare of Miss Dido (as she was called) to the hospital at Wapiti, and had raised a subscription for her maintenance there, heading it herself with a liberal sum. Then the atmosphere round her became less trying; yet her temper remained changeable, and had it not been that she was good-looking and witty, her posi-

tion might have been insecure. As it was, she ruled in a neutral territory where she was the only woman.

One night, after an inclement remark to Jacques, in the card-room, Blanche came back to the bar, and not noticing that, while she was gone, Soldier Joe had entered and laid himself down on a bench in a corner, she threw her head passionately forward on her arms as they rested on the counter, and cried: "O my God! my God!"

Soldier Joe lay still as if sleeping, and when Blanche was called away again he rose, stole out, went down to Freddy Tarlton's office, and offered to bet Freddy two to one that Blanche wouldn't live a year. Joe's experience of women was limited. He had in his mind the case of a girl who had accidentally smothered her child; and so he said:

"Blanche has something on her mind that's killing her, Freddy. When trouble fixes on her sort it kills swift and sure. They've nothing to live for but life, and it isn't good enough, you see, for—for—" Joe paused to find out where his philosophy was taking him.

Freddy Tarlton finished the sentence for him: "*For an inner sorrow is a consuming fire.*"

Fort Latrobe soon had an unexpected opportunity to study Soldier Joe's theory. One night Jacques did not appear at Weir's Tavern as he had engaged to do, and Soldier Joe and another went across the frozen river to his log-hut to seek him. They found him by a handful of fire, breathing heavily and nearly unconscious. One of the sudden and frequently fatal *colds* of the mountains had fastened on him, and he had begun a war for life. Joe started back at once for liquor and a doctor, leaving his comrade to watch by the sick man.

He could not understand why Blanche should stagger and grow white when he told her; nor why she insisted on taking the liquor herself. He did not yet guess the truth.

The next day all Fort Latrobe knew that Blanche was nursing Jacques, on what was thought to be his no-return journey. The doctor said it was a dangerous case, and he held out little hope. Nursing might bring him through, but the chance was very slight. Blanche only occasionally left the sick man's bedside to be relieved by Soldier Joe and Freddy Tarlton. It dawned on Joe at last,—it had dawned on Freddy before,—what Blanche meant by the heart-breaking words uttered that night in Weir's Tavern. Down through the crust of this woman's heart had gone something both joyful and painful. Whatever it was, it made Blanche a saving nurse, a good apothecary; for, one night the doctor pronounced Jacques out of danger, and said that a few days would bring him round if he was careful.

Now, for the first time, Jacques fully comprehended all Blanche had done for him, though he had ceased to wonder at her changed attitude to him. Through his suffering and his delirium had come the understanding of it. When, after the crisis, the doctor turned away from the bed, Jacques looked steadily into Blanche's eyes, and she flushed, and wiped the wet from his brow with her handkerchief. He took the handkerchief from her fingers gently before Soldier Joe came over to the bed.

The doctor had insisted that Blanche should go to Weir's Tavern and get the night's rest, needed so much, and Joe now pressed her to keep her promise. Jacques added an urging word, and after a time she started. Joe had forgotten to tell her that a new road had been

made on the ice since she had crossed, and that the old road was dangerous. Wandering with her thoughts she did not notice the spruce bushes set up for signal, until she had stepped on a thin piece of ice. It bent beneath her. She slipped: there was a sudden sinking, a sharp cry, then another, piercing and hopeless—and it was the one word—"Jacques!" Then the night was silent as before. But someone had heard the cry. Freddy Tarlton was crossing the ice also, and that desolating *Jacques!* had reached his ears. When he found her he saw that she had been taken and the other left. But that other, asleep in his bed at the sacred moment when she parted, suddenly waked, and said to Soldier Joe:

"Did you speak, Joe? Did you call me?"

But Joe, who had been playing cards with himself, replied, "I haven't said a word."

And Jacques then added: "Perhaps I dream—perhaps."

On the advice of the doctor and Freddy Tarlton, the bad news was kept from Jacques. When she did not come the next day, Joe told him that she couldn't; that he ought to remember she had had no rest for weeks, and had earned a long rest. And Jacques said that was so.

Weir began preparations for the funeral, but Freddy Tarlton took them out of his hands—Freddy Tarlton, who visited at the homes of Fort Latrobe. But he had the strength of his convictions such as they were. He began by riding thirty miles and back to ask the young clergyman at Purple Hill to come and bury Blanche. She'd reformed and been *baptised*, Freddy said with a sad sort of humour. And the clergyman, when he knew all, said that he would come. Freddy was hardly prepared for what occurred when he got back. Men were

waiting for him, anxious to know if the clergyman was coming. They had raised a subscription to cover the cost of the funeral, and among them were men such as Harry Delong.

"You fellows had better not mix yourselves up in this," said Freddy.

But Harry Delong replied quickly: "I am going to see the thing through." And the others endorsed his words.

When the clergyman came, and looked at the face of this Magdalene, he was struck by its comeliness and quiet. All else seemed to have been washed away. On her breast lay a knot of white roses—white roses in this winter desert.

One man present, seeing the look of wonder in the clergyman's eyes, said quietly: "My—my wife sent them. She brought the plant from Quebec. It has just bloomed. She knows all about *her*."

That man was Harry Delong. The keeper of his home understood the other homeless woman. When she knew of Blanche's death she said: "Poor girl, poor girl!" and then she had gently added, "Poor Jacques!"

And Jacques, as he sat in a chair by the fire four days after the tragedy, did not know that the clergyman was reading over a grave on the hillside, words which are for the hearts of the quick as for the untenanted dead.

To Jacques's inquiries after Blanche, Soldier Joe had made changing and vague replies. At last he said that she was ill; then, that she was very ill, and again, that she was better, almighty better—now. The third day following the funeral, Jacques insisted that he would go and see her. The doctor at length decided he should be taken to Weir's Tavern, where, they declared, they would tell him all. And they took him, and placed

him by the fire in the card-room, a wasted figure, but fastidious in manner and scrupulously neat in person as of old. Then he asked for Blanche; but even now they had not the courage for it. The doctor nervously went out, as if to seek her; and Freddy Tarlton said, "Jacques, let us have a little game, just for quarters, you know. Eh?"

The other replied without eagerness: "*Voilà*, one game, then!"

They drew him to the table, but he played listlessly. His eyes shifted ever to the door. Luck was against him. Finally he pushed over a silver piece, and said: "The last. My money is all gone. *Bien!*" He lost that too.

Just then the door opened, and a ranchman from Purple Hill entered. He looked carelessly round, and then said loudly:

"Say, Joe, so you've buried Blanche, have you? Poor old girl!"

There was a heavy silence. No one replied. Jacques started to his feet, gazed around searchingly, painfully, and presently gave a great gasp. His hands made a chafing motion in the air, and then blood showed on his lips and chin. He drew a handkerchief from his breast.

"*Pardon! . . . Pardon!*" he faintly cried in apology, and put it to his mouth.

Then he fell backwards in the arms of Soldier Joe, who wiped a moisture from the lifeless cheek as he laid the body on a bed.

In a corner of the stained handkerchief they found the word,—

Blanche.

A SANCTUARY OF THE PLAINS

A SANCTUARY OF THE PLAINS

Father Corraine stood with his chin in his hand and one arm supporting the other, thinking deeply. His eyes were fixed on the northern horizon, along which the sun was casting oblique rays; for it was the beginning of the winter season.

Where the prairie touched the sun it was responsive and radiant; but on either side of this red and golden tapestry there was a tawny glow and then a duskiness which, curving round to the north and east, became blue and cold—an impalpable but perceptible barrier rising from the earth, and shutting in Father Corraine like a prison wall. And this shadow crept stealthily on and invaded the whole circle, until, where the radiance had been, there was one continuous wall of gloom, rising arc upon arc to invasion of the zenith, and pierced only by some intrusive wandering stars.

And still the priest stood there looking, until the darkness closed down on him with an almost tangible consistency. Then he appeared to remember himself, and turned away with a gentle remonstrance of his head, and entered the hut behind him. He lighted a lamp, looked at it doubtfully, blew it out, set it aside, and lighted a candle. This he set in the one window of the room which faced the north and west.

He went to a door opening into the only other room in the hut, and with his hand on the latch looked thoughtfully and sorrowfully at something in the corner of the room where he stood. He was evidently de-

bating upon some matter,—probably the removal of what was in the corner to the other room. If so, he finally decided to abandon the intention. He sat down in a chair, faced the candle, again dropped his chin upon his hand, and kept his eyes musingly on the light. He was silent and motionless a long time, then his lips moved, and he seemed to repeat something to himself in whispers.

Presently he took a well-worn book from his pocket, and read aloud from it softly what seemed to be an office of his Church. His voice grew slightly louder as he continued, until, suddenly, there ran through the words a deep sigh which did not come from himself. He raised his head quickly, started to his feet, and turning round, looked at that something in the corner. It took the form of a human figure, which raised itself on an elbow and said: "Water—water—for the love of God!"

Father Corraine stood painfully staring at the figure for a moment, and then the words broke from him: "Not dead—not dead—wonderful!" Then he stepped quickly to a table, took therefrom a pannikin of water, and kneeling, held it to the lips of the gasping figure of a woman, throwing his arm round the shoulder, and supporting the head on his breast. Again he spoke: "Alive—alive! Blessed be Heaven!"

The hands of the woman seized the hand of the priest, which held the pannikin, and kissed it, saying faintly: "You are good to me. . . . But I must sleep —I must sleep—I am so tired; and I've—very far—to go—across the world."

This was said very slowly, then the head thick with brown curls dropped again on the priest's breast, heavy with sleep. Father Corraine, flushing slightly at first,

became now slightly pale, and his brow was a place of war between thankfulness and perplexity. But he said something prayerfully, then closed his lips firmly, and gently laid the figure down, where it was immediately clothed about with slumber. Then he rose, and standing with his eyes bent upon the sleeper and his fingers clasping each other tightly before him, said: "Poor girl! So, she is alive. And now what will come of it?"

He shook his grey head in doubt, and immediately began to prepare some simple food and refreshment for the sufferer when she should awake. In the midst of doing so he paused and repeated the words, "*And what will come of it?*" Then he added: "There was no sign of pulse nor heart-beat when I found her. But life hides itself where man cannot reach it."

Having finished his task, he sat down, drew the book of holy offices again from his bosom, and read it, whisperingly, for a time; then fell to musing, and, after a considerable time, knelt down as if in prayer. While he knelt, the girl, as if startled from her sleep by some inner shock, opened her eyes wide and looked at him, first with bewilderment, then with anxiety, then with wistful thankfulness. "Oh, I thought—I thought when I awoke before that it was a woman. But it is the good Father Corraine—Corraine, yes, that was the name."

The priest's clean-shaven face, long hair, and black cassock had, in her first moments of consciousness, deceived her. Now a sharp pain brought a moan to her lips; and this drew the priest's attention. He rose, and brought her some food and drink. "My daughter," he said, "you must take these." Something in her face touched his sensitive mind, and he said, solemnly: "You are alone with me and God, this hour. Be at peace. Eat."

Her eyes swam with instant tears. "I know—I am alone—with God," she said. Again he gently urged the food upon her, and she took a little; but now and then she put her hand to her side as if in pain. And once, as she did so, she said: "I've far to go and the pain is bad. Did they take him away?"

Father Corraine shook his head. "I do not know of whom you speak," he replied. "When I went to my door this morning I found you lying there. I brought you in, and, finding no sign of life in you, sent Feather-foot, my Indian, to Fort Cypress for a trooper to come; for I feared that there had been ill done to you, somehow. This border-side is but a rough country. It is not always safe for a woman to travel alone."

The girl shuddered. "Father," she said,—"Father Corraine, I believe you are?" (Here the priest bowed his head.) "I wish to tell you all, so that if ever any evil did come to me, if I should die without doin' what's in my heart to do, you would know, and would tell *him* if you ever saw him, how I remembered, and kept rememberin' him always, till my heart got sick with waitin', and I came to find him far across the seas."

"Tell me your tale, my child," he patiently said. Her eyes were on the candle in the window questioningly. "It is for the trooper—to guide him," the other remarked. "'Tis past time that he should be here. When you are able you can go with him to the Fort. You will be better cared for there, and will be among women."

"The man—the man who was kind to me—I wish I knew of him," she said.

"I am waiting for your story, my child. Speak of your trouble, whether it be of the mind and body, or of the soul."

"You shall judge if it be of the soul," she answered.

"I come from far away. I lived in old Donegal since the day that I was born there, and I had a lover, as brave and true a lad as ever trod the world. But sorrow came. One night at Farcalladen Rise there was a crack of arms and a clatter of fleeing hoofs, and he that I loved came to me and said a quick word of partin', and with a kiss—it's burnin' on my lips yet—askin' pardon, father, for speech of this to you—and he was gone, an outlaw, to Australia. For a time word came from him. Then I was taken ill and couldn't answer his letters, and a cousin of my own, who had tried to win my love, did a wicked thing. He wrote a letter to him and told him I was dyin', and that there was no use of farther words from him. And never again did word come to me from him. But I waited, my heart sick with longin' and full of hate for the memory of the man who, when struck with death, told me of the cruel deed he had done between us two."

She paused, as she had to do several times during the recital, through weariness or pain; but, after a moment, proceeded. "One day, one beautiful day, when the flowers were like love to the eye, and the larks singin' overhead, and my thoughts goin' with them as they swam until they were lost in the sky, and every one of them a prayer for the lad livin' yet, as I hoped, somewhere in God's universe—there rode a gentleman down Farcalladen Rise. He stopped me as I walked, and said a kind good-day to me; and I knew when I looked into his face that he had word for me—the whisperin' of some angel, I suppose,—and I said to him as though he had asked me for it, 'My name is Mary Callen, sir.'

"At that he started, and the colour came quick to his face; and he said: 'I am Sir Duke Lawless. I come to look for Mary Callen's grave. Is there a Mary Callen

dead, and a Mary Callen livin'? and did both of them love a man that went from Farcalladen Rise one wild night long ago?'

"'There's but one Mary Callen,' said I, 'but the heart of me is dead, until I hear news that brings it to life again?'

"'And no man calls you wife?' he asked.

"'No man, Sir Duke Lawless,' answered I. 'And no man ever could, save him that used to write me of you from the heart of Australia; only there was no *Sir* to your name then.'

"'I've come to that since,' said he.

"'Oh, tell me,' I cried, with a quiverin' at my heart, 'tell me, is he livin'?'

"And he replied: 'I left him in the Pipi Valley of the Rocky Mountains a year ago.'

"'A year ago!' said I, sadly.

"'I'm ashamed that I've been so long in comin' here,' replied he; 'but, of course, *he* didn't know that you were alive, and I had been parted from a lady for years—a lover's quarrel—and I had to choose between courtin' her again and marryin' her, or comin' to Farcalladen Rise at once. Well, I went to the altar first.'

"'Oh, sir, you've come with the speed of the wind, for now that I've news of him, it is only yesterday that he went away, not years agone. But tell me, does he ever think of me?' I questioned.

"'He thinks of you,' he said, 'as one for whom the masses for the dead are spoken; but while I knew him, first and last, the memory of you was with him.'

"With that he got off his horse, and said: 'I'll walk with you to his father's home.'

"'You'll not do that,' I replied; 'for it's level with the ground. God punish them that did it! And they're

lyin' in the glen by the stream that he loved and galloped over many a time.'

"'They are dead—they are dead, then,' said he, with his bridle swung loose on his arm and his hat off reverently.

"'Gone home to Heaven together,' said I, 'one day and one hour, and a prayer on their lips for the lad; and I closin' their eyes at the last. And before they went they made me sit by them and sing a song that's common here with us; for manny and manny of the strength and pride of Farcalladen Rise have sailed the wide seas north and south, and otherwhere, and comin' back maybe and maybe not.'

"'Hark,' he said, very gravely, 'and I'll tell you what it is, for I've heard him sing it, I know, in the worst days and the best days that ever we had, when luck was wicked and big against us and we starvin' on the wallaby track; or when we found the turn in the lane to brighter days.'

"And then with me lookin' at him full in the eyes, gentleman though he was,—for comrade he had been with the man I loved,—he said to me there, so finely and kindly, it ought to have brought the dead back from their graves to hear, these words:

"'You'll travel far and wide, dear, but you'll come back again,
You'll come back to your father and your mother in the glen,
Although we should be lyin' 'neath the heather grasses then—
You'll be comin' back, my darlin'!'

"'You'll see the icebergs sailin' along the wintry foam,
The white hair of the breakers, and the wild swans as they roam;
But you'll not forget the rowan beside your father's home—
You'll be comin' back, my darlin'.'"

Here the girl paused longer than usual, and the priest dropped his forehead in his hand sadly.

"I've brought grief to your kind heart, father," she said.

"No, no," he replied, "not sorrow at all; but I was born on the Liffey side, though it's forty years and more since I left it, and I'm an old man now. That song I knew well, and the truth and the heart of it too. . . . I am listening."

"Well, together we went to the grave of the father and mother, and the place where the home had been, and for a long time he was silent, as though they who slept beneath the sod were his, and not another's; but at last he said:

"'And what will you do? I don't quite know where he is, though; when last I heard from him and his comrades, they were in the Pipi Valley.'

"My heart was full of joy; for though I saw how touched he was because of what he saw, it was all common to my sight, and I had grieved much, but had had little delight; and I said:

"'There's only one thing to be done. He cannot come back here, and I must go to him—that is,' said I, 'if you think he cares for me still,—for my heart quakes at the thought that he might have changed.'

"'I know his heart,' said he, 'and you'll find him, I doubt not, the same, though he buried you long ago in a lonely tomb,—the tomb of a sweet remembrance, where the flowers are everlastin'.' Then after more words he offered me money with which to go; but I said to him that the love that couldn't carry itself across the sea by the strength of the hands and the sweat of the brow was no love at all; and that the harder was the road to him the gladder I'd be, so

that it didn't keep me too long, and brought me to him at last.

"He looked me up and down very earnestly for a minute, and then he said: 'What is there under the roof of heaven like the love of an honest woman! It makes the world worth livin' in.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'when love has hope, and a place to lay its head.'

"'Take this,' said he—and he drew from his pocket his watch—'and carry it to him with the regard of Duke Lawless, and this for yourself'—fetching from his pocket a revolver and putting it into my hands; 'for the prairies are but rough places after all, and it's better to be safe than—worried. . . . Never fear though but the prairies will bring back the finest of blooms to your cheek, if fair enough it is now, and flush his eye with pride of you; and God be with you both, if a sinner may say that, and breakin' no saint's prerogative.' And he mounted to ride away, havin' shaken my hand like a brother; but he turned again before he went, and said: 'Tell him and his comrades that I'll shoulder my gun and join them before the world is a year older, if I can. For that land is God's land, and its people are my people, and I care not who knows it, whatever here I be.'

"I worked my way across the sea, and stayed awhile in the East earning money to carry me over the land and into the Pipi Valley. I joined a party of emigrants that were goin' westward, and travelled far with them. But they quarrelled and separated, I goin' with these that I liked best. One night though, I took my horse and left; for I knew there was evil in the heart of a man who sought me continually, and the thing drove me mad. I rode until my horse could stumble no farther, and then I took the saddle for a pillow and slept on the bare

ground. And in the morning I got up and rode on, seein' no house nor human being for manny and manny a mile. When everything seemed hopeless I came suddenly upon a camp. But I saw that there was only one man there, and I should have turned back, but that I was worn and ill, and, moreover, I had ridden almost upon him. But he was kind. He shared his food with me, and asked me where I was goin'. I told him, and also that I had quarrelled with those of my party and had left them—nothing more. He seemed to wonder that I was goin' to Pipi Valley; and when I had finished my tale he said: 'Well, I must tell you that I am not good company for you. I have a name that doesn't pass at par up here. To speak plain truth, troopers are looking for me, and —strange as it may be—for a crime which I didn't commit. That is the foolishness of the law. But for this I'm making for the American border, beyond which, treaty or no treaty, a man gets refuge.'

"He was silent after that, lookin' at me thoughtfully the while, but in a way that told me I might trust him, evil though he called himself. At length he said: 'I know a good priest, Father Corraine, who has a cabin sixty miles or more from here, and I'll guide you to him, if so be you can trust a half-breed and a gambler, and one men call an outlaw. If not, I'm feared it'll go hard with you; for the Cypress Hills are not easy travel, as I've known this many a year. And should you want a name to call me, Pretty Pierre will do, though my god-fathers and godmothers did different for me before they went to Heaven.' And nothing said he irreverently, father."

Here the priest looked up and answered: "Yes, yes, I know him well—an evil man, and yet he has suffered too . . . Well, well, my daughter?"

"At that he took his pistol from his pocket and handed it. 'Take that,' he said. 'It will make you safer with me, and I'll ride ahead of you, and we shall reach there by sundown, I hope.'

"And I would not take his pistol, but, shamed a little, showed him the one Sir Duke Lawless gave me. 'That's right,' he said, 'and, maybe, it's better that I should carry mine, for, as I said, there are anxious gentlemen lookin' for me, who wish to give me a quiet but dreary home. And see,' he added, 'if they should come you will be safe, for they sit in the judgment seat, and the statutes hang at their saddles, and I'll say this for them, that a woman to them is as a saint of God out here where women and saints are few.'

"I do not speak as he spoke, for his words had a turn of French; but I knew that, whatever he was, I should travel peaceably with him. Yet I saw that he would be runnin' the risk of his own safety for me, and I told him that I could not have him do it; but he talked me lightly down, and we started. We had gone but a little distance, when there galloped over a ridge upon us, two men of the party I had left, and one, I saw, was the man I hated; and I cried out and told Pretty Pierre. He wheeled his horse, and held his pistol by him. They said that I should come with them, and they told a dreadful lie—that I was a runaway wife; but Pierre answered them they lied. At this, one rode forward suddenly, and clutched me at my waist to drag me from my horse. At this, Pierre's pistol was thrust in his face, and Pierre bade him cease, which he did; but the other came down with a pistol showin', and Pierre, seein' they were determined, fired; and the man that clutched at me fell from his horse. Then the other drew off; and Pierre got down, and stooped, and felt the man's heart,

and said to the other: 'Take your friend away, for he is dead; but drop that pistol of yours on the ground first.' And the man did so; and Pierre, as he looked at the dead man, added: 'Why did he make me kill him?'

"Then the two tied the body to the horse, and the man rode away with it. We travelled on without speakin' for a long time, and then I heard him say absently: 'I am sick of *that*. When once you have played shuttlecock with human life, you have to play it to the end—that is the penalty. But a woman is a woman, and she must be protected.' Then afterward he turned and asked me if I had friends in Pipi Valley; and because what he had done for me had worked upon me, I told him of the man I was goin' to find. And he started in his saddle, and I could see by the way he twisted the mouth of his horse that I had stirred him."

Here the priest interposed: "What is the name of the man in Pipi Valley to whom you are going?"

And the girl replied: "Ah, father, have I not told you? It is Shon McGann—of Farcalladen Rise."

At this, Father Corraine seemed suddenly troubled, and he looked strangely and sadly at her. But the girl's eyes were fastened on the candle in the window, as if she saw her story in it; and she continued: "A colour spread upon him, and then left him pale; and he said: 'To Shon McGann—you are going to *him?* Think of that—that!' For an instant I thought a horrible smile played upon his face, and I grew frightened, and said to him: 'You know him. You are not sorry that you are helping me? You and Shon McGann are not enemies?'

"After a moment the smile that struck me with dread passed, and he said, as he drew himself up with a shake: 'Shon McGann and I were good friends—as good as

ever shared a blanket or split a loaf, though he was free of any evil, and I failed of any good. . . . Well, there came a change. We parted. We could meet no more; but who could have guessed *this* thing? Yet, hear me—I am no enemy of Shon McGann, as let my deeds to you prove.' And he paused again, but added presently: 'It's better you should have come now than two years ago.'

"And I had a fear in my heart, and to this asked him why. 'Because then he was a friend of mine,' he said, 'and ill always comes to those who are such.' I was troubled at this, and asked him if Shon was in Pipi Valley yet. 'I do not know,' said he, 'for I've travelled long and far from there; still, while I do not wish to put doubt into your mind, I have a thought he may be gone. . . . He had a gay heart,' he continued, 'and we saw brave days together.'

"And though I questioned him, he told me little more, but became silent, scannin' the plains as we rode; but once or twice he looked at me in a strange fashion, and passed his hand across his forehead, and a grey look came upon his face. I asked him if he was not well. 'Only a kind of fightin' within,' he said; 'such things soon pass, and it is well they do, or we should break to pieces.'

"And I said again that I wished not to bring him into danger. And he replied that these matters were accordin' to Fate; that men like him must go on when once the die is cast, for they cannot turn back. It seemed to me a bitter creed, and I was sorry for him. Then for hours we kept an almost steady silence, and comin' at last to the top of a rise of land he pointed to a spot far off on the plains, and said that you, father, lived there; and that he would go with me still a little

way, and then leave me. I urged him to go at once, but he would not, and we came down into the plains. He had not ridden far when he said sharply:

"'The Riders of the Plains, those gentlemen who seek me, are there—see! Ride on or stay, which you please. If you go you will reach the priest, if you stay here where I shall leave you, you will see me taken perhaps, and it may be fightin' or death; but you will be safe with them. On the whole, it is best, perhaps, that you should ride away to the priest. They might not believe all that you told them, ridin' with me as you are.'

"But I think a sudden madness again came upon me. Rememberin' what things were done by women for refugees in old Donegal, and that this man had risked his life for me, I swung my horse round nose and nose with his, and drew my revolver, and said that I should see whatever came to him. He prayed me not to do so wild a thing; but when I refused, and pushed on along with him, makin' at an angle for some wooded hills, I saw that a smile played upon his face. We had almost reached the edge of the wood when a bullet whistled by us. At that the smile passed and a strange look came upon him, and he said to me:

"'This must end here. I think you guess I have no coward's blood; but I am sick to the teeth of fightin'. I do not wish to shock you, but I swear, unless you turn and ride away to the left towards the priest's house, I shall save those fellows further trouble by killin' myself here; and there,' said he, 'would be a pleasant place to die—at the feet of a woman who trusted you.'

"I knew by the look in his eye he would keep his word.

"'Oh, is this so?' I said.

"'It is so,' he replied, 'and it shall be done quickly, for the courage to death is on me.'

"'But if I go, you will still try to escape?' I said. And he answered that he would. Then I spoke a God-bless-you, at which he smiled and shook his head, and leanin' over, touched my hand, and spoke low: 'When you see Shon McGann, tell him what I did, and say that we are even now. Say also that you called Heaven to bless me.' Then we swung away from each other, and the troopers followed after him, but let me go my way; from which, I guessed, they saw I was a woman. And as I rode I heard shots, and turned to see; but my horse stumbled on a hole and we fell together, and when I waked, I saw that the poor beast's legs were broken. So I ended its misery, and made my way as best I could by the stars to your house; but I turned sick and fainted at the door, and knew no more until this hour. . . . You thought me dead, father?"

The priest bowed his head, and said: "These are strange, sad things, my child; and they shall seem stranger to you when you hear all."

"*When I hear all!* Ah, tell me, father, do you know Shon McGann? Can you take me to him?"

"I know him, but I do not know where he is. He left the Pipi Valley eighteen months ago, and I never saw him afterwards; still I doubt not he is somewhere on the plains, and we shall find him—we shall find him, please Heaven."

"Is he a good lad, father?"

"He is brave, and he was always kind. He came to me before he left the valley—for he had trouble—and said to me: 'Father, I am going away, and to what place is far from me to know, but wherever it is, I'll live a life that's fit for men, and not like a loafer on God's world;' and he gave me money for masses to be said—for the dead."

The girl put out her hand. "Hush! hush!" she said. "Let me think. Masses for the dead. . . . What dead? Not for me; he thought me dead long, long ago."

"No; not for you," was the slow reply.

She noticed his hesitation, and said: "Speak. I know that there is sorrow on him. Someone—someone—he loved?"

"Someone he loved," was the reply.

"And she died?" The priest bowed his head.

"She was his wife—Shon's wife?" and Mary Callen could not hide from her words the hurt she felt.

"I married her to him, but yet she was not his wife."

There was a keen distress in the girl's voice. "Father, tell me, tell me what you mean."

"Hush, and I will tell you all. He married her, thinking, and she thinking, that she was a widowed woman. But her husband came back. A terrible thing happened. The woman believing, at a painful time, that he who came back was about to take Shon's life, fired at him, and wounded him, and then killed herself."

Mary Callen raised herself upon her elbow, and looked at the priest in piteous bewilderment. "It is dreadful," she said. . . . "Poor woman! . . . And he had forgotten—forgotten me. I was dead to him, and am dead to him now. There's nothing left but to draw the cold sheet of the grave over me. Better for me if I had never come—if I had never come, and instead were lyin' by his father and mother beneath the rowan."

The priest took her wrist firmly in his. "These are not brave nor Christian words, from a brave and Christian girl. But I know that grief makes one's words wild. Shon McGann shall be found. In the days when I saw him most and best, he talked of you as an angel gone, and he had never sought another woman had he

known that you lived. The Mounted Police, the Riders of the Plains, travel far and wide. But now, there has come from the farther West a new detachment to Fort Cypress, and they may be able to help us. But listen. There is something more. The man Pretty Pierre, did he not speak puzzling words concerning himself and Shon McGann? And did he not say to you at the last that *they were even now?* Well, can you not guess?"

Mary Callen's bosom heaved painfully and her eyes stared so at the candle in the window that they seemed to grow one with the flame. At last a new look crept into them; a thought made the lids close quickly as though it burned them. When they opened again they were full of tears that shone in the shadow and dropped slowly on her cheeks and flowed on and on, quivering too in her throat.

The priest said: "You understand, my child?"

And she answered: "I understand. Pierre, the outlaw, was *her* husband."

Father Corraine rose and sat beside the table, his book of offices open before him. At length he said: "There is much that might be spoken; for the Church has words for every hour of man's life, whatever it be; but there comes to me now a word to say, neither from prayer nor psalm, but from the songs of a country where good women are; where however poor the fireside, the loves beside it are born of the love of God, though the tongue be angry now and then, the foot stumble, and the hand quick at a blow." Then, with a soft, ringing voice, he repeated:

"'New friends will clasp your hand, dear, new faces on you smile—
You'll bide with them and love them, but you'll long for us the while;
For the word across the water, and the farewell by the stile—
For the true heart's here, my darlin'.'"

Mary Callen's tears flowed afresh at first; but soon after the voice ceased she closed her eyes and her sobs stopped, and Father Corraine sat down and became lost in thought as he watched the candle. Then there went a word among the spirits watching that he was not thinking of the candle, or of them that the candle was to light on the way, nor even of this girl near him, but of a summer forty years gone when he was a goodly youth, with the red on his lip and the light in his eye, and before him, leaning on a stile, was a lass with—

" . . . cheeks like the dawn of day."

And all the good world swam in circles, eddying ever inward until it streamed intensely and joyously through her eyes "blue as the fairy flax." And he had carried the remembrance of this away into the world with him, but had never gone back again. He had travelled beyond the seas to live among savages and wear out his life in self-denial; and now he had come to the evening of his life, a benignant figure in a lonely land. And as he sat here murmuring mechanically bits of an office, his heart and mind were with a sacred and distant past. Yet the spirits recorded both these things on their tablets, as though both were worthy of their remembrance.

He did not know that he kept repeating two sentences over and over to himself:

"'*Quoniam ipse liberavit me de laqueo venantium et a verbo aspero. Quoniam angelis suis mandavit de te: ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.*'"

These he said at first softly to himself, but unconsciously his voice became louder, so that the girl heard, and she said:

"Father Corraine, what are those words? I do not understand them, but they sound comforting."

And he, waking from his dream, changed the Latin into English, and said:

"'For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunter, and from the sharp sword.
For he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'"

"The words are good," she said. He then told her he was going out, but that he should be within call, saying, at the same time, that someone would no doubt arrive from Fort Cypress soon: and he went from the house. Then the girl rose slowly, crept lamely to a chair and sat down. Outside, the priest paced up and down, stopping now and then, and listening as if for horses' hoofs. At last he walked some distance away from the house, deeply lost in thought, and he did not notice that a man came slowly, heavily, to the door of the hut, and opening it, entered.

Mary Callen rose from her seat with a cry in which was timidity, pity, and something of horror; for it was Pretty Pierre. She recoiled, but seeing how he swayed with weakness, and that his clothes had blood upon them, she helped him to a chair. He looked up at her with an enigmatical smile, but he did not speak.

"Oh," she whispered, "you are wounded!"

He nodded; but still he did not speak. Then his lips moved dryly. She brought him water. He drank deeply, and a sigh of relief escaped him. "You got here safely," he now said. "I am glad of that—though you, too, are hurt."

She briefly told him how, and then he said: "Well, I suppose you know all of me now?"

"I know what happened in Pipi Valley," she said, timidly and wearily. "Father Corraine told me."

"Where is he?"

When she had answered him, he said: "And you are willing to speak with me still?"

"You saved me," was her brief, convincing reply. "How did you escape? Did you fight?"

"No," he said. "It is strange. I did not fight at all. As I said to you, I was sick of blood. These men were only doing their duty. I might have killed two or three of them, and have escaped, but to what good? When they shot my horse,—my good Sacrament,—and put a bullet into this shoulder, I crawled away still, and led them a dance, and doubled on them; and here I am."

"It is wonderful that they have not been here," she said.

"Yes, it is wonderful; but be very sure they will be with that candle in the window. Why is it there?"

She told him. He lifted his brows in stoic irony, and said: "Well, we shall have an army of them soon." He rose again to his feet. "I do not wish to die, and I always said that I would never go to prison. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she replied. She went immediately to the window, took the candle from it, and put it behind an improvised shade. No sooner was this done than Father Corraine entered the room, and seeing the outlaw, said: "You have come here, Pierre?" And his face showed wonder and anxiety.

"I have come, *mon père*, for sanctuary."

"For sanctuary! But, my son, if I vex not Heaven by calling you so, why"—he saw Pierre stagger slightly. "But you are wounded." He put his arm round the other's shoulder, and supported him till he recovered himself. Then he set to work to bandage anew the wound, from which Pierre himself had not unskilfully

extracted the bullet. While doing so, the outlaw said to him:

"Father Corraine, I am hunted like a coyote for a crime I did not commit. But if I am arrested they will no doubt charge me with other things—ancient things. Well, I have said that I should never be sent to gaol, and I never shall; but I do not wish to die at this moment, and I do not wish to fight. What is there left?"

"How do you come here, Pierre?"

He lifted his eyes heavily to Mary Callen, and she told Father Corraine what had been told her. When she had finished, Pierre added:

"I am no coward, as you will witness; but as I said, neither gaol nor death do I wish. Well, if they should come here, and you said, *Pierre is not here*, even though I was in the next room, they would believe you, and they would not search. Well, I ask such sanctuary."

The priest recoiled and raised his hand in protest. Then, after a moment, he said:

"How do you deserve this? Do you know what you ask?"

"*Ah, oui,* I know it is immense, and I deserve nothing: and in return I can offer nothing, not even that I will repent. And I have done no good in the world; but still perhaps I am worth the saving, as may be seen in the end. As for you, well, you will do a little wrong so that the end will be right. So?"

The priest's eyes looked out long and sadly at the man from under his venerable brows, as though he would see through him and beyond him to that end; and at last he spoke in a low, firm voice:

"Pierre, you have been a bad man; but sometimes you have been generous, and of a few good acts I know—"

"No, not good," the other interrupted. "I ask *this* of your charity."

"There is the law, and my conscience."

"The law! the law!" and there was sharp satire in the half-breed's voice. "What has it done in the West? Think, *mon père!* Do you not know a hundred cases where the law has dealt foully? There was more justice before we had law. Law—" And he named over swiftly, scornfully, a score of names and incidents, to which Father Corraine listened intently. "But," said Pierre, gently, at last, "but for your conscience, m'sieu', that is greater than law. For you are a good man and a wise man; and you know that I shall pay my debts of every kind some sure day. That should satisfy *your* justice, but you are merciful for the moment, and you will spare until the time be come, until the corn is ripe in the ear. Why should I plead? It is foolish. Still, it is my whim, of which, perhaps, I shall be sorry to-morrow . . . Hark!" he added, and then shrugged his shoulders and smiled. There were sounds of hoof-beats coming faintly to them. Father Corraine threw open the door of the other room of the hut, and said: "Go in there—Pierre. We shall see . . . we shall see."

The outlaw looked at the priest, as if hesitating; but, after, nodded meaningly to himself, and entered the room and shut the door. The priest stood listening. When the hoof-beats stopped, he opened the door, and went out. In the dark he could see that men were dismounting from their horses. He stood still and waited. Presently a trooper stepped forward and said warmly, yet brusquely, as became his office: "Father Corraine, we meet again!"

The priest's face was overswept by many expressions,

in which marvel and trouble were uppermost, while joy was in less distinctness.

"Surely," he said, "it is Shon McGann."

"Shon McGann, and no other.—I that laughed at the law for many a year,—though never breaking it beyond repair,—took your advice, Father Corraine, and here I am, holding that law now as my bosom friend at the saddle's pommel. Corporal Shon McGann, at your service."

They clasped hands, and the priest said: "You have come at my call from Fort Cypress?"

"Yes. But not these others. They are after a man that's played ducks and drakes with the statutes—Heaven be merciful to him, I say. For there's naught I treasure against him; the will of God bein' in it all, with some doin' of the Devil, too, maybe."

Pretty Pierre, standing with ear to the window of the dark room, heard all this, and he pressed his upper lip hard with his forefinger, as if something disturbed him.

Shon continued. "I'm glad I wasn't sent after him as all these here know; for it's little I'd like to clap irons on his wrists, or whistle him to come to me with a Winchester or a Navy. So I'm here on my business, and they're here on theirs. Though we come together it's because we met each other hereaway. They've a thought that, maybe, Pretty Pierre has taken refuge with you. They'll little like to disturb you, I know. But with dead in your house, and you givin' the word of truth,—which none other could fall from your lips,—they'll go on their way to look elsewhere."

The priest's face was pinched, and there was a wrench at his heart. He turned to the others. A trooper stepped forward.

"Father Corraine," he said, "it is my duty to search your house; but not a foot will I stretch across your threshold if you say no, and give the word that the man is not with you."

"Corporal McGann," said the priest, "the woman whom I thought was dead did not die, as you shall see. There is no need for inquiry. But she will go with you to Fort Cypress. As for the other, you say that Father Corraine's threshold is his own, and at his own command. His home is now a sanctuary—for the afflicted." He went towards the door. As he did so, Mary Callen, who had been listening inside the room with shaking frame and bursting heart, dropped on her knees beside the table, her head in her arms. The door opened. "See," said the priest, "a woman who is injured and suffering."

"Ah," rejoined the trooper, "perhaps it is the woman who was riding with the half-breed. We found her dead horse."

The priest nodded. Shon McGann looked at the crouching figure by the table pityingly. As he looked he was stirred, he knew not why. And she, though she did not look, knew that his gaze was on her; and all her will was spent in holding her eyes from his face, and from crying out to him.

"And Pretty Pierre," said the trooper, "is not here with her?"

There was an unfathomable sadness in the priest's eyes, as, with a slight motion of the hand towards the room, he said: "You see—he is not here."

The trooper and his men immediately mounted; but one of them, young Tim Kearney, slid from his horse, and came and dropped on his knee in front of the priest.

"It's many a day," he said, "since before God or man I bent a knee—more shame to me for that, and for mad days gone; but I care not who knows it, I want a word of blessin' from the man that's been out here like a saint in the wilderness, with a heart like the Son o' God."

The priest looked at the man at first as if scarce comprehending this act so familiar to him, then he slowly stretched out his hand, said some words in benediction, and made the sacred gesture. But his face had a strange and absent look, and he held the hand poised, even when the man had risen and mounted his horse. One by one the troopers rode through the faint belt of light that stretched from the door, and were lost in the darkness, the thud of their horses' hoofs echoing behind them. But a change had come over Corporal Shon McGann. He looked at Father Corraine with concern and perplexity. He alone of those who were there had caught the unreal note in the proceedings. His eyes were bent on the darkness into which the men had gone, and his fingers toyed for an instant with his whistle; but he said a hard word of himself under his breath, and turned to meet Father Corraine's hand upon his arm.

"Shon McGann," the priest said, "I have words to say to you concerning this poor girl."

"You wish to have her taken to the Fort, I suppose? What was she doing with Pretty Pierre?"

"I wish her taken to her home."

"Where is her home, father?" And his eyes were cast with trouble on the girl, though he could assign no cause for that.

"Her home, Shon,"—the priest's voice was very gentle—"her home was where they sing such words as these of a wanderer:

"'You'll hear the wild birds singin' beneath a brighter sky,
The roof-tree of your home, dear, it will be grand and high;
But you'll hunger for the hearthstone where a child you used to lie—
You'll be comin' back, my darlin'.'"

During these words Shon's face ran white, then red; and now he stepped inside the door like one in a dream, and the girl's face was lifted to his as though he had called her. "Mary—Mary Callen!" he cried. His arms spread out, then dropped to his side, and he fell on his knees by the table facing her, and looked at her with love and horror warring in his face; for the remembrance that she had been with Pierre was like the hand of the grave upon him. Moving not at all, she looked at him, a numb despondency in her face. Suddenly Shon's look grew stern, and he was about to rise; but Father Corraine put a hand on his shoulder, and said: "Stay where you are, man—on your knees. There is your place just now. Be not so quick to judge, and remember your own sins before you charge others without knowledge. Listen now to me."

And he spoke Mary Callen's tale as he knew it, and as she had given it to him, not forgetting to mention that she had been told the thing which had occurred in Pipi Valley.

The heroic devotion of this woman, and Pretty Pierre's act of friendship to her, together with the swift panorama of his past across the seas, awoke the whole man in Shon, as the staunch life that he had lately led rendered it possible. There was a grave, kind look upon his face when he rose at the ending of the tale, and came to her, saying:

"Mary, it is I who need forgiveness. Will you come

now to the home you wanted?" and he stretched his arms to her. . . .

An hour after, as the three sat there, the door of the other room opened, and Pretty Pierre came out silently, and was about to pass from the hut; but the priest put a hand on his arm, and said:

"Where do you go, Pierre?"

Pierre shrugged his shoulder slightly:

"I do not know. *Mon Dieu!*—that I have put this upon you!—you that never spoke but the truth."

"You have made my sin of no avail," the priest replied; and he motioned towards Shon McGann, who was now risen to his feet, Mary clinging to his arm.

"Father Corraine," said Shon, "it is my duty to arrest this man; but I cannot do it, would not do it, if he came and offered his arms for the steel. *I'll* take the wrong of this now, sir, and such shame as there is in that falsehood on my shoulders. And she here and I, and this man too, I doubt not, will carry your sin—as you call it—to our graves, without shame."

Father Corraine shook his head sadly, and made no reply, for his soul was heavy. He motioned them all to sit down. And they sat there by the light of a flickering candle, with the door bolted and a cassock hung across the window, lest by any chance this uncommon thing should be seen. But the priest remained in a shadowed corner, with a little book in his hand, and he was long on his knees. And when morning came they had neither slept nor changed the fashion of their watch, save for a moment now and then, when Pierre suffered from the pain of his wound, and silently passed up and down the little room.

The morning was half gone when Shon McGann and Mary Callen stood beside their horses, ready to

mount and go; for Mary had persisted that she could travel—joy makes such marvellous healing. When the moment of parting came, Pierre was not there. Mary whispered to her lover concerning this. The priest went to the door of the hut and called him. He came out slowly.

"Pierre," said Shon, "there's a word to be said between us that had best be spoken now, though it's not aisy. It's little you or I will care to meet again in this world. There's been credit given and debts paid by both of us since the hour when we first met; and it needs thinking to tell which is the debtor now, for deeds are hard to reckon; but, before God, I believe it's meself;" and he turned and looked fondly at Mary Callen.

And Pierre replied: "Shon McGann, I make no reckoning close; but we will square all accounts here, as you say, and for the last time; for never again shall we meet, if it's within my will or doing. But I say I am the debtor; and if I pay not here, there will come a time!" and he caught his shoulder as it shrunk in pain of his wound. He tapped the wound lightly, and said with irony: "This is my note of hand for my debt, Shon McGann. Eh, *bien!*"

Then he tossed his fingers indolently towards Shon, and turning his eyes slowly to Mary Callen, raised his hat in good-bye. She put out her hand impulsively to him, but Pierre, shaking his head, looked away. Shon put his hand gently on her arm. "No, no," he said in a whisper, "there can be no touch of hands between us."

And Pierre, looking up, added: "*C'est vrai.* That is the truth. You go—home. I got to hide. So—so."

And he turned and went into the hut.

The others set their faces northward, and Father Corraine walked beside Mary Callen's horse, talking quietly of their future life, and speaking, as he would never speak again, of days in that green land of their birth. At length, upon a dividing swell of the prairie, he paused to say farewell.

Many times the two turned to see, and he was there, looking after them; his forehead bared to the clear inspiring wind, his grey hair blown back, his hands clasped. Before descending the trough of a great land-wave, they turned for the last time, and saw him standing motionless, the one solitary being in all their wide horizon.

But outside the line of vision there sat a man in a prairie hut, whose eyes travelled over the valley of blue sky stretching away beyond the morning, whose face was pale and cold. For hours he sat unmoving, and when, at last, someone gently touched him on the shoulder, he only shook his head, and went on thinking.

He was busy with the grim ledger of his life.

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